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DISCOVERING THE BLUESTOCKINGS.

A Neglected Constellation of Clever Women.

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"Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken".

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THE EMERGENCE OF THE BLUESTOCKING

"Thus, towards the end of the eighteenth century a change came about which, if I were re-writing history, I should describe more fully and think of greater importance than the Crusades or The Wars of the Roses. The middle-class woman began to write."

Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, (1929), Penguin Books, (1945), 54.

From the world of the Bluestockings, from the peace of the Augustans, we are separated by a gulf which yawns wider as the decades of the twentieth century roll past. From our world of narrowing mental and physical liberties, of calamity and strife and darkening horizons, of spiritual confusion, we can only look across the abyss wistfully and enviously to that "other Eden", that land of light and peace, of mental light and physical peace. But light must cast its shadows and blinded he would be by the perpetual, steady but never dazzling light (i) of this happy epoch who forgot its dark places - its cruel punishments, its public hangings, its searing poverty, its highway robberies, its fearful prisons, the filth and squalor of its towns, its heavy drinking and its heavier gambling. But for all the shadows, the light shines serenely on. It is worth going back nearly two centuries just to bathe for a little in the amber glow. Life was, at least for the wealthy and educated, for the aristocracy of England, most gracious and mellow in eighteenth-century England. Even for the nation at large, despite the shadows, life was not unhappy. (ii)

(i) "The common daylight which now descends upon a distracted world may be prosaic, but at least it is steady and serene and has not yet become dark with excessive light." Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background, (1940), 1.

(ii) "The spirit of aristocracy and the spirit of popular rights seemed to have arrived at a perfect harmony peculiar to the England of that epoch... There was no class hatred, and though highest and lowest were far apart, there were infinite gradations and no rigid class barriers as on the continent. But this careless, goodnatured society could not outlast the coming of the Industrial Revolution".

G. M. Trevelyan, History of England, (1926), 514.

Contemplation of such a century gives us something of the bouquet of its own fine claret. And if we compare that civilisation to rare claret our own must seem like that wayside brandy of which Stevenson speaks, new and villainous and coarse. And yet that aristocratic and attractive epoch was the seed-bed of many of the ideas, the movements that have since created for good or ill, economic, political, social and educational revolutions, which in their turn have levelled and standardised men.

But one change in the modern world has been a happy one, the change in the position of women, a change, some would say, of as great significance as the rise of democracy. The seeds of the emancipation of women were really sown at the Renaissance, but they lay for a long time in a cold dark bed till, watered and nourished by Steele and Addison and Swift, sensing the sunshine of approval from Richardson and Johnson, they finally thrust their shoots above ground in the middle of the eighteenth century. Here and there previously, however, there had been a premature growth, where local conditions had been particularly beneficent. The Renaissance had given men a great new faith in the regenerating power of education. Ignorance was therefore a thing to be deplored in women as in men (1). The Reformation had drawn attention to

(1) Richard Mulcaster writing on the education of women in the middle of the sixteenth century took up this Renaissance theme with the firm conviction that the disposition to learn is God-given and that to neglect the gift of God is morally wrong.

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many disturbing words of Scripture, not least to the fact that "in Christ Jesus is neither male nor female." It seemed natural therefore that the whole question of women's education should occupy the minds of such contemporary scholars as More, Erasmus, and Vives. More's example in particular, set the fashion for gentlemen of high rank in England to give their daughters a liberal education. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there were rare and delightful women who were liberally educated. One remembers the distinguished women of Tudor days: Mary and Elizabeth Tudor themselves, Katherine Parr, Lady Jane Grey, Mary, Countess of Pembroke, Sidney's sister. And in the later century there are one or two pre-eminent and familiar names: the names of Margaret, the somewhat fantastic Duchess of Newcastle, who used to attend daily lectures in London on Natural Philosophy, Physics and Chemistry, of Katherine Phillips, the "Matchless Crinda", who had read the Bible through before she was four years old, and of the Countess of Winchilsea one of the first "feminists". Nor can one forget Mrs. Aphra Behn, the first woman to earn her living by writing. But general progress was slow, partly because the mental climate was not yet prepared for the acceptance of women as creatures of mind and partly, too, because of the perpetual civil strife and unrest in the latter century. Towards the end of the century however, progress began to be steady. Much was achieved by Mrs. Bathsua Makin, the disciple of the Dutch bluestocking, Anna d Schurmann, many

of whose ideas Mrs. Makin incorporated in her Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen (1673). The names of Mary Astell, who published A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest (1697); of Anne Baynard, Greek scholar and disciple of Locke; and of the extraordinary Elizabeth Elstob (i) who actually published an "English-Saxon" grammar (1715) are very remarkable in this period. The influence of such individuals was by no means negligible, for every liberally educated woman played a part in the slow wearing down of barriers against the education of the sex. The difficulty was that there was no co-ordinated effort. It was only with the new century, with the great work first of Steele, then of Addison, that widespread attention was drawn to the problem of the development of the feminine mind. In The Tatler, chiefly in the delightful papers where Mrs. Jenny Distaff, Bickerstaff's half-sister is the editor, Steele began by attacking the hypocrisy, the frivolity, the idleness, the immorality of the modish life of the day and placed before his readers the example of the virtuous, sincere, home-keeping woman. Addison took up the tale as part of his policy to bring "philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses". (ii) He underlined and

(i) She has a definite link with the Bluestockings, because she was governess to the children of the Duchess of Portland.

(ii) The Spectator, x.

elaborated Steele's text stressing particularly the need to furnish the feminine mind. (i) He begged women to see that the ornament of a virtuous and informed mind was far more becoming to them than the most elaborate suit of ribbons or the latest cherry-coloured hood. Swift, like Steele and Addison, deplored the vanity, the lack of education in women. "It is a little hard that not one gentleman's daughter in a thousand should be brought up to read or understand her own national tongue or judge of the easiest books that are written in it." (ii) To Mrs. Delany he complained of a gentlewoman who wrote and spelt "like a Wapping wench". (iii) And there was something of the schoolmaster in his relationships with both Stella and Vanessa. But Steele, Addison and Swift were all afraid of anything like a learned lady. Dr. Edward Young, the author of the once popular Night Thoughts was impatient with the "pretty sort of woman" (iv) and thoroughly appreciative of women of reasonable intellect and education. In a sense he is a bridge between Steele, Addison and Swift, and Samuel Richardson who was a much more thorough champion of the

(i) With this in view, Steele published The Ladies' Library, (1714).

(ii) Jonathan Swift, Works, (1825 edn.), I, 233.

(iii) Mary Delany, The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany, ed. Lady Llanover, (1925), I. 551.

(iv) E. J. Climensson, Elizabeth Montagu, The Queen of the Bluestockings, (1906) I, 60.

education of the sex than any of his predecessors. Like them he did not forget that the virtuous woman "seeketh wool and flax and worketh willingly with her hands", but he was a more ardent supporter than they of the systematic education of the sex. To Mrs. Chapone he wrote letting her know how eager he was to "whet", to "stimulate ladies, to show what they are able to do and how fit they are to be intellectual as well as domestic companions to men of the best sense. The men are hastening apace, dwindling into idleness, into commonplace, into dictionary learning. The ladies in time will tell them what is in the works themselves - only taking care, as I hope, not to neglect their domestic duties..." (i) All this deliberate propaganda could not but succeed in creating a climate of opinion kindly towards women ready to take up the challenge to furnish their minds and give their lives more depth and direction.

And in another way the time was favourable for the establishment of women's claims to intellect, for "it was the special function of the eighteenth century to diffuse common sense and reasonableness in life and thought". (ii) Mystical explanations of any human experiences were at a

(i) Samuel Richardson, Letters, ed. Barbauld (1804), vi, 122. The underlining is mine.

(ii) G. M. Trevelyan, History of England, 514.

discount. . It was not really a very far cry from the loss of faith in the Divine Right of Kings, to the loss of faith in the divine right of man to rule woman. At a time when reason was leading man to consider his rights, it was surely natural that the rights of woman should also come under rational consideration. So the necessary intellectual and spiritual atmosphere had been slowly created. The "power of the moment" was present. All that was required was the power of the woman.

(i) It was this hour in the middle of the eighteenth century that produced the Bluestockings, the first women to make a concerted effort to establish women's claim to intellect.

My purpose then is with the Bluestocking ladies of the eighteenth century, and chiefly, to discover them, for they have been much neglected. With the exception of Fanny Burney, very little is known of them. I am not however, going to deal with their interest to the social historian, although their letters provide a fund of information on the costume, amusements, medicine, food and travelling of the day. Nor am I concerned with their significance in the history of women's education, although they are not unimportant, there, as Mrs. Dorothy Gardiner has indicated. (ii) Still less am I concerned

(i) To adapt Matthew Arnold's argument, when he discusses the conditions under which creative literary genius can thrive. "Function of Criticism." Essays Literary and Critical. Everyman, (1906), 3-4.

(ii) English Girlhood at School, (1929), 413-426.

with wider and more general questions that have arisen by the emergence of the Bluestockings, with the fascinating matter of feminism and the many questions that branch off from it and are still very much alive. Should women indulge in intellectual pursuits at all? Has woman unsexed herself by so doing? Should the intellectual pursuits of women be circumscribed? (1) What I want to do is to bring the Bluestockings out of the obscurity in which they have undeservedly lain for so long, and to indicate their literary achievement and their place in the history of English literature.

(1) There is most fascinating matter for a thesis in many of these questions, not least in the question of the relation of costume to the position of women in society, for it is noteworthy that in periods of female intellectual ascendancy, woman's dress becomes straighter in line and less womanly. Men's costume too seems to vary with women's aspirations. And not only men's costume. A recent writer in The Radio Times (November 8th, 1946) wittily relates the fluctuations in the rise and decline of the beard inversely with the rise and decline of woman's intellect.

THE TERM BLUESTOCKING.

"Then I bought of a pedlar two pretty, round-eared caps, a little straw-hat, and a pair of knit-mittens turned up with white calico, and two pair of blue-worsted hose with white clocks, that make a smartish appearance, I'll assure you." Pamela Andrews prepares a wardrobe "fit for her condition". Samuel Richardson, Pamela(1742), Everyman, (1914), I, 34.

Several ingenious theories have been put forward in explanation of the term bluestocking, the most important being those advanced by Hayward, by Brewer and by De Quincey. Hayward asserts that Mme. de Polignac who had an eighteenth century French salon wore blue silk stockings on a visit to Mrs. Montagu's assembly and that thus the name was derived. (i) Brewer goes further back to a fifteenth-century Venetian society, Della Calza, distinguished by the blue colour of the stockings worn by its members. The fashion adopted by this society was supposed to have spread from Italy to French intellectual circles at the end of the sixteenth century and then to England about 1780. (ii) De Quincey, suiting fancy rather than fact, traced the origin of the word to an old Oxford statute which charged it as a point of conscience that loyal students should wear "cerulean socks". (iii). But all this ingenuity has been, perhaps fortunately, wasted on an ungrateful public, for only a few people have even the vaguest idea of the origin of the term and of these few the majority

(i) Hayward, Autobiography Letters and Literary Remains of Mrs. Piozzi, (1861 2nd edn.), I, 27.

(ii) Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, (1923).

(iii) Works, ed. David Masson, (1890), I, 332 n.

seem to think it is foreign. In fact it is native and quite simple. About the middle of the eighteenth century some English ladies began to hold assemblies of men and women (i) at their houses, assemblies for intellectual conversation. Although these meetings intended "to mix the rank and the literature", they were also meant to be quite informal (ii) and therefore formal dress was waived. At these assemblies Benjamin Stillingfleet, the naturalist, and grandson of the well known Bishop, made a habit of appearing in the grey or blue worsted stockings worn by the common people of England in the middle of the eighteenth century, instead of ⁱⁿ the usual black silk stockings. It is Fanny Burney who tells us that the name originated with Mrs. Vesey. The latter invited Stillingfleet to a literary meeting at Bath, but he excused himself because he had no suitable dress for an evening assembly. The friendly and simple reply was "Pho, pho, don't mind dress. Come in your blue stockings!" (iii)

(i) It is interesting to note that in 1698 the newly-founded Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge had decided against mixed committees, "on the plea of avoidance of scandal, 'to which promiscuous meetings cannot but be liable' and in the conviction that they (women) could better learn their husbands' views and girls their parents', in the privacy of home". Gardiner, 301 n².

(ii) The Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, 1778-1840, ed. C. Barrett and A. Dobson, (1904), I, 123.

(iii) M. D'Arblay, Memoirs of Dr. Burney, (1832), II, 262-3.

It seems clear from this (and Fanny's evidence fits in most harmoniously with contemporary references, although these differ in details) that the systematic figurative use of the word bluestocking originated when Stillingfleet's informal dress was described as his "blue stockings". The figure of speech then employed was synecdoche, the blue stockings being but a part of his whole dress. Gradually the phrase came to be used metaphorically to describe the kind of person who attended these mixed assemblies, the change in figure being reflected in a change in the number of the noun, a change from plural to singular. A good many years later the phrase was applied adjectivally to the meetings themselves, some say (i) by Admiral Boscawen, and later still, but before the year 1786, a foreigner of distinction translated the phrase into French, (ii) so that occasionally the meetings were called "Bas Bleu" meetings.

The earliest reference to Stillingfleet's blue-stockings occurs in a letter from a friend of Mrs. Montagu's, written in November 1756, referring to a visit Stillingfleet had paid to

(i) The year of the publication of Hannah More's, The Bas Bleu.

(ii) Translated into French in England, the phrase "bas bleu" was adopted in France. Bluestocking was also literally translated into German, becoming Blaustrumpf.

her at her home in Berkshire. "Monsey (i) swears he will make out some story of you and him before you are much older; you shall not keep blue stockings at Sandleford for nothing" (ii) In 1757, Mrs. Montagu wrote to Dr. Monsey, "Our friend Stillingfleet is more attached to the lilies of the field than the lilies of the town, --- I assure you our philosopher is so much a man of pleasure, he has left off his old friends and his blue stockings and is at operas and other gay assemblies every night." (iii) Boswell tells us in 1781, that he had it from Burke that Stillingfleet was called "blue-socking" at Mrs. Montagu's (iv). Hannah More does not mention Stillingfleet in her prefatorial note to The Bas Bleu (1786), but she indicates that by that date it had been the custom to call the friends who thus met for literary conversation, "Bluestockings."

(i) Dr. Messenger Monsey, the eccentric physician of Chelsea College who carried on a mild flirtation with Mrs. Montagu. In 1768, when he was well over seventy, he entertained the King of Denmark and for this occasion washed his face for the first time in his life. It was said that his face had not seen water since his baptism. R. Blunt, Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, 'Queen of the Blues', (1923), II, 2.

(ii) Climenson I, 98.

(iii) R. Blunt, Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, 'Queen of the Blues', 1923, II, 2.

(iv) James Boswell, Private Papers -- from Malahide Castle, Prepared G. Scott; vol. VII and subsequent vols. ed. F.A. Pottle, XIV, 209.

In his Life and Writings of James Beattie (1806) (i) Sir William Forbes substantiates the Stillingfleet origin without indicating where the name was given to him. He further says that it was Admiral Boscawen who called the people who frequented the assemblies the "Blue Stocking" Society, and he follows Hannah More in asserting that 'a foreigner of distinction' gave the societies the title "Bas Bleu".

It is highly improbable that blue worsted stockings were worn by any of the ladies, the description of Mrs. Montagu's nephew as "only fit to darn his aunt's blue stockings," (ii) being certainly metaphorical, and it is unlikely that any of the men but Stillingfleet wore them. That the epithet was originally applied to a man is consistent with the conventions of the day, for in the middle of the eighteenth century and for many years to come, righteous woman began at the neck and ended at the ankle, to echo Kipling's description of women in his youth. (iii) It would have been shocking to describe a woman by her stockings. When Mr. B. took Pamela to her "late lady's

(i) I, 210 n.

(ii) Blunt II, 10.

(iii) At a Horse Race in Paris in 1775, Mrs. Thrale was shocked to see a woman "riding astride with her thick legs totally uncovered except by her stockings, the whiteness of which attracted all eyes to look at them" The French Journals of Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Johnson, ed. M. Tyson and H. Guppy, (1932), 100.

closet," he gave her among other of her lady's fine things, "four pair of white cotton stockings, three pair of fine silk ones and two pair of rich stays." The stays brought forth never a blush, for stays were often worn outside the upper garment in the eighteenth century. But the prudent Pamela "was inwardly ashamed to take the stockings, for Mrs. Jervis was not there: if she had it would have been nothing. I believe I received them very awkwardly; for he smiled at my awkwardness and said, 'Don't blush, Pamela; dost think I don't know pretty maids should wear shoes and stockings?'" (1) Gradually however, as the phrase took on a wholly metaphorical meaning, and indeed as the Montagu correspondence above cited indicates, the metaphorical sense was implicit in its use almost from the beginning, it began to be used also of the ladies.

It is worth noticing that it was not so much the colour of the stockings as the material which signified their everyday use. Blue, a word of rich literal and poetical colour associations, is a misleading adjective for the blue-grey worsted to which it is here applied. Stillingfleet had been

(1) Richardson, Pamela, Everyman, (1914), I, 8.

more appropriately called "Worsted stockings." (i) It is further interesting to note that this inaccurate colour-epithet was the word of the phrase that persisted and that was used in a variety of ways metaphorically. It was used as a noun to describe the people who attended such assemblies. One would find "the finest bit of blue" (ii) at Miss Monckton's. Again it was used as a noun or an adjective to describe the intellectual fare at the parties. Fanny Burney tells us that Lady Hesketh had sent several invitations to the Burneys for "blue" at her house. (iii) "Everything delectable in the blue way," was to be found at Mrs. Ord's. (iv) A new abstract noun was made from it, blueism, indicating intellectualism. Mrs. Thrale used this word in a letter to Queeney, July 1784. "Poor Mrs. Montagu! Miss Gregory has married without her consent and professing to prefer competence and the company of an honest man to tonism and blueism, has oddly enough, as I think, got the world on her side." (v)

(i) This phrase was actually used metaphorically by Shakespeare in Lear to indicate shabbiness of character. Kent said of Oswald that he was "a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy, worsted-stocking knave." Act II, Sc. II, lls. 14-15. The N.E.D. cites a passage indicating a similar metaphorical use for blue-stocking. The Little Parliament of 1653 was called a "blue-stocking, barebones parliament." Akin to these examples is Byron's description of Crabbe: "A Pope in worsted stockings."

(ii) J. Boswell, Life of Samuel Johnson, ed. G.B.Hill rev. L. F.Powell, (1932-8), IV, 108-9.

(iii) Diary, V, 180

(iv) William Roberts, Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hannah More, (1838), I, 317.

(v) The Queeney Letters, ed. Marquis of Lansdowne, (1934), 167.

It may be useful to make a clear distinction between the Bluestockings and bluestockings. It was in the nineteenth century that the word bluestocking and the epithet blue began to be used with much opprobrium, particularly by reviewers, to denote the pedantry and the frumpiness that made Sidney Smith write, "If the stocking be blue, the petticoat must be long". Indeed the affectation, pedantry and pretension, the unwomanliness and dowdiness later associated with the word bluestocking were not qualities of the original leading Bluestockings, even if some of these characteristics were dimly foreshadowed in the lesser Bluestockings.(i) These ladies were all too naturally gifted to require to pretend to knowledge. Mrs. Montagu and Hannah More had social pretensions in later life.(ii) Pretensions of any kind were far from the other ladies with whom I shall be dealing. Nor were any of them frumps. It was part of their code that a woman must not draw attention to herself either by extravagance in

(i) It was these qualities in particular that Molière attacked in Frenchwomen in the previous century.

"...les femmes docteurs ne sont point de mon goût

Et j'aime que souvent, aux questions qu'on fait,
Elle sache ignorer les choses qu'elle sait;
De son étude, enfin je veux qu'elle se cache,
Et qu'elle ait du savoir sans vouloir qu'on le sache,
Sans citer les auteurs, sans dire de grands mots..."

Les Femmes Savantes (1672) Théâtre Complet, Librairie
Flammarion, IV, Act. I, Sc.III, 249.

(ii) Mrs. Montagu's social ambitions will be constantly referred to. Hannah More's later life is outside my sphere but it is interesting that De Quincey charges her with worldliness. He, of course, probably suffered from his mother's friendship with Hannah More. See De Quincey, Works, xiv, 105.

her dress or by lack of conformity to fashion. Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Thrale may have had occasional lapses, into extravagance, not so any of the other Bluestockings. The conception of bluestockings in the first half of the nineteenth century is well indicated by a delightful piece of satire in Susan Ferrier's novel, Marriage, (1818), where she describes a female assembly at the house of Mrs. Bluemits. The conversation is larded with quotations and is all ridiculously pretentious, affected, vain and worthless. When the time comes for farewells, the conversation goes thus:

"Fly not yet, 'tis just the hour," said Mrs. Bluemits to the first of her departing guests as the clock struck ten.

'It is gone with its thorns and its roses,' replied her friend with a sigh and a farewell pressure of the hand---

'I vanish,' said Mrs. Apsley, snatching up her tippet, reticule etc.; 'and like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a rack behind.'

'Fare-thee-well at once - adieu, adieu, adieu, remember me!' cried the last of the band as she slowly retreated." (i) The same conception is hinted at in scattered places in Sir Walter Scott's Journal, (ii) and in some interesting passages in Lockhart's Letters. (iii) Byron enjoyed himself thoroughly laughing at The Blues, (iv) inventing "blue" names,

(i) II, 210-11. (ii) ed. John G. Tait (1939-1946), I, 213, III, 95, 169.

(iii) Peter's Letters to His Kinsfolk, (1819), I, 297-302, 311-314.

(iv) See his poem of that title. Poetry, Collected Works, (1898), IV, 567-588, and various references in his poems and prose works.

Sir Richard and Lady Bluebottle, Lady Bluemount for example; but he himself admitted that his satire on the subject was "mere buffoonery".(i) A more exaggerated conception of bluestockings in the later nineteenth century is represented in Barbey D'Aurévilly's scathing preface to Les Bas-Bleus, (1878). "Bas bleu est masculin.(ii) Les Bas-bleus ont, plus ou moins, donné la démission de leur sexe--- La première punition de ces jalouses du génie des hommes a été de perdre le leur - le génie de la mise, cette poésie d'elles - même, dont elles sont tout ensemble le poème et le poète. La seconde a été de n'avoir plus le moindre droit aux ménagements respectueux qu'on doit à la femme---en vanité tout bas-bleu est une botte de sept lieues." It is interesting to notice, however, that the Oxford English Dictionary says the word bluestocking has been nearly abandoned as a result of the general change in the education of women. Actually De Quincey anticipated that as long ago as 1853. In his notes for the 1853 edition of his Works, he wrote, "The order of ladies called bluestockings by way of reproach, has become totally extinct among us, except only here and there, with superannuated clingers to obsolete remembrances. The reason of this change is interesting; and I do not scruple to call it honourable to our intellectual progress. In the last (but still more in the penultimate) generation, any tincture of literature, of liberal curiosity

(i) Prose Collected Works, (1898) V, 369.

(ii) The German word is also masculine, der Blaustrumpf.

about science, or of ennobling interest in books, carried with it an air of something unsexual, mannish and (as it was treated by the sycophantic satirists that for ever honour the prevailing folly) of something ludicrous. This mode of treatment was possible so long as the literary class of ladies formed a feeble minority. But now---the very possibility of the ridicule has been undermined by stern reality; and the verbal expression of the reproach is fast becoming not empty, obsolete but even unintelligible to our juniors". (1)

(1) Works, I, 322.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BLUESTOCKINGS.

"Meantime, all that I contend for, is, that genius, whether in men or women, should take its course: that, as the ray of divinity, it should not be suppressed. But I acknowledge that the great and indispensable duties of women are of the domestic kind; and that, if a woman neglects these, or despise them for the sake of science itself, which I call learning, she is good for nothing."

Richardson, Correspondence, ed. Barbauld, VI, 79-80.

I come now to consider what kind of people the Bluestockings were. Having distinguished them from bluestockings I now turn to consider them more particularly. What kind of people were they? From what class of society? And in particular what characteristics marked them as a group from their contemporaries? The danger in a chapter such as this is that of making sweeping generalisations. I shall try to avoid that danger by concentrating chiefly on those things which all, or at least the majority of the leading Bluestockings had in common. Here and there, this or that individual will stand apart from the group, for they were all women of outstanding personality and strong individuality. Differentiation will be made clear in the chapters dealing with them as individuals. Meantime, my business is with them as a group.

To begin with, there are some marked superficial and external resemblances. They all belonged, for example, to that broad, aristocratic, cultured class of society, to the real ruling class of the England of their day. Indeed in a measure they reflect admirably the breadth of the social aristocracy of the day for, as Professor Trevelyan has written, it included, "not only the great nobles but the squires, the wealthier clergy, and the cultivated middle classes who consorted with them on familiar terms." (1) At the top of the scale, there is Mrs. Delany, aristocratic to the finger-tips; Mrs. Montagu, Mrs.

(1) G. M. Trevelyan, English Social History, (1944), 398.

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Thrale and Mrs. Vesey represent "the squires;" Mrs. Carter, Miss Talbot and Mrs. Chapone "the wealthier clergy"; Fanny Burney and Hannah More "the cultivated middle classes". One is not able to say by any means that the Bluestockings were distinguished as a group for great personal beauty. And yet without exception, they had the power of attracting as their friends, men of genius and ability. In fact, it is most striking to note how much these women were influenced by friendships with the great men of their day, for each was on terms of intimate friendship with at least one man of outstanding character. Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Thrale, Fanny Burney and Catherine Talbot were influenced beyond our just estimation by Dr. Conyers Middleton, by Dr. Arthur Collier, by "Daddy Crisp" and by Archbishop Secker respectively. That was in youth and adolescence. But in womanhood and even more strikingly in their later maturity, and even in old age the Bluestockings continued to attract and fascinate the great men of their day. Dean Swift, Dr. Edward Young, Samuel Richardson, Laurence Sterne, Lord Bath, Lord Lyttelton, Sir William Weller Pepys, Dr. Johnson, David Garrick, Dr. Burney, Dr. James Beattie, Horace Walpole, Sir Joshua Reynolds, John Newton, William Wilberforce, were all intimately connected with one or more of them. A much more comprehensive list could be made of outstanding men who were associated with them and proud to be so. That list would include Edmund Burke, Richard Sheridan and

Soame Jenyns. There are other interesting superficial resemblances pertaining to several of the Bluestockings but not to the whole group. Most of them, for example, suffered constantly and seriously from ill-health. Mrs. Delany, Mrs. Vesey and Fanny Burney seem to have been more regularly healthy than the others and Mrs. Thrale's ill-health was the result of her constant child-bearing. But Catherine Talbot died of cancer at the age of 49; Hannah More took serious paroxysms caused by inflammatory attacks on the lungs; Mrs. Chapone was asthmatic; Mrs. Montagu was all her life subject to serious internal troubles- 'spasms' and 'cholic' she calls them - and Mrs. Carter was a prey to crippling headaches. Yet with the one exception noted, they all lived to a very ripe old age. Finally, Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Carter and Fanny Burney were all very "near-sighted" and as a result all three tended to "stoop and peer" like Dr. Johnson and Edmund Burke.

But to come to less superficial common characteristics. Without exception, the Bluestockings approached life with a serious conception of woman's function in society. Their original impatience with cards and the extravagancies of the dress of the day were symbolic of their impatience with the vanity, the shallowness of the then fashionable life. They had too much common sense to have any really lasting quarrel with card-playing, although one or other, at one time or another in her life might shun cards. Most of them were quite genuinely interested in clothes, in their proper place. But

they all sensed the aimlessness, the purposelessness of the modish life of their day, and dissatisfied with it, attempted to give their own lives more depth and direction. Scattered through their letters are attacks on, and illuminating glimpses of the absurd fashions, particularly of the absurd head-gear of the century. The best of these occur in Mrs. Delany's Autobiography and Correspondence. In one passage she refers to "wasp waists." "Dr. Pringle declares he has had four of his patients martyrs to that folly (indeed wickedness) and when they were opened, it was evident that their deaths were occasioned by strait-lacing." (i) In another place she speaks of heads "so enormous that nobody can sit upright in their coaches, but stoop forwards as if they had got the children's cholic". (ii) "Preposterous Babelonian heads towering to the sky" are her words in yet another place (iii) Mrs. Chapone and Mrs. Carter contributed articles to The Rambler expressing their impatience with fashionable life. Mrs. Chapone's article will be referred to as adumbrating the Bluestocking assemblies. Mrs. Carter's is a sustained piece of Addisonian

(i) Autobiography, V, 160

(ii) Ibid., 189. One day when the young people in Evelina were discussing who was tallest amongst them, young Branghton insisted upon their measuring fair, and not with heads and heels. (1794, I, 77). Turberville reproduces an excellent cartoon entitled A Hint to the Ladies to take Care of their Heads, where the candelabra are really in danger from towering, cascading plumes. English Men and Manners in the Eighteenth Century, (1929), 101.

(iii) Ibid., 200.

satire, pleading that Mr. Rambler furnish his readers with "an ample description of the whole set of polite acquirements; a complete history of forms, fashions, frolics, of routs, drums, hurricanes, balls, assemblies, ridottos, masquerades, auctions, plays, operas, puppet-shows and bear-gardens; of all those delights which profitably engage the attention of the most sublime characters, and by which they have brought to such amazing perfection the whole art and mystery of passing day after day, week after week and year after year without the heavy assistance of any one thing that formal animals are pleased to call useful or necessary." The essay goes on in that strain and concludes: "In short, Mr. Rambler, by a faithful representation of the numberless benefits of modish life, you will have done your part in promoting, what every body seems to confess the true purpose of human existence, perpetual dissipation...and all serious thoughts, but particularly that of Hereafter, will be banished out of the world: a most perplexing apprehension, but luckily a most groundless one too, as it is so very clear a case that nobody ever dies". (1)

More dramatically, Mrs. Montagu expressed the same protest in the second of her Dialogues of the Dead, that between Mercury and a Modern Fine Lady. Mercury is sent for Mrs. Modish but she cannot come for she is "engaged, absolutely engaged," but, of course, not to her husband and children, but to the play on Monday, balls on Tuesdays, the opera on Saturdays, and to card-

(1) The Rambler, No. 100, (Publ. in Pennington, II, 139).

assemblies the rest of the week." But she questions the messenger of the gods. "Pray have you a fine Vauxhall or Ranelagh? I think I should not dislike drinking of Lethe waters, when you have a full season." Mrs. Modish has to admit however, that for all her diversions, she has not really been happy in her pursuit of "bon ton" which she cleverly defines: "It is - I can never tell you what it is; but I will try to tell you what it is not. In conversation it is not wit; in manners it is not politeness; in behaviour it is not address; but it is a little like them all. It can only belong to people of a certain rank, who live in a certain manner, with certain persons, who have not certain virtues and who have certain vices, and who inhabit a certain part of the town." Asking Mercury for advice, Mrs. Modish is told to look after her husband and the education of her children. But she maintains that she has not neglected the matter. They had a dancing-master, a music-master, a drawing master, and a French governess. Alas! Mercury feels they will never be good wives or mothers. And so her punishment is a continuance of the kind of life she had on earth (an idea not uncommon in modern drama and fiction), a wandering aimlessly about the banks of the Styx. (1)

But what must be stressed is that the Bluestockings, while eager that the life of women should be less shallow and vain, were far from imagining the emancipated woman as we know her.

(1) Dialogues of the Dead, II, In 1777 Edition of the Essay on Shakespeare, 296.

At Bath in 1780, Mrs. Montagu disapproved strongly of the women who strutted about in their riding-dresses in a morning. She wrote, "If the sun is so powerful as to be dangerous to Miss's beauty she does not retire to her chamber till the fervour of the noon is over, but takes her umbrella: if dripping rain, snow, or hail threaten to impair the gloss of her apparel, and spoil her shoes, she adds a pair of pattens to her equipment, and if the North East wind rages she takes shelter in a man's 'surtout'...Alas! what wives, mothers and mistresses of families will this academy furnish!" (i)

In the Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Mrs. Chapone stated clearly that she would not have a woman learn the classics, and in A Letter to a New Married Lady she indicated that married women could not safely have friendships with men other than their husbands. Mrs. Delany would not enter into political matters for "women lose all their dignity when they meddle with subjects that don't belong to them; their own sphere affords them opportunities enough to show their real consequence. A pretending woman and a trifling ignorant man are equally despicable." (ii) In fact, the Bluestocking attitude to woman's sphere is represented by their insistence on propriety in woman's behaviour. And the conception of propriety in woman's behaviour is certainly very closely connected with her relationship to the other sex. Mrs. Delany

(i) Blunt, II, 81.

(ii) Delany, Autobiography, V, 103.

born in 1700 and Hannah More born in 1745 drew the 'proper' line at a different place, for Hannah More certainly was active in political affairs; but even to Hannah, who in her manifold public services and independent way of life comes nearest of all the Bluestockings to a modern woman, woman is the inferior sex, finding her true happiness in subjection to man. The idea of equality of the sexes was far from the minds of the Bluestockings. Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Women was as unwelcome to them as the French Revolution. (i) The Bluestockings, even the three single ones amongst them, had all a sense of their womanly vocation as home-makers. They looked well to their households. (ii) They did not break away from the English tradition whereby every woman was nimble with her needle, least of all Mrs. Carter, the most learned of them all, whose needle was both useful and ornamental, and whose devotion to the study of Epictetus was somewhat hampered by the necessity of shirt-making for her brothers. Nor were they

(i) Horace Walpole's comment to Hannah More is interesting; he classes Mary Wollstonecraft with "the philosophising serpents", Tooke and Paine. She is excommunicated from his Library. Letters, ed. Mrs. Paget Toynbee, 1903-5, XV, 131.

(ii) Perhaps man's slowness to agree to the education of women has been partly due to his fear that she would neglect her domestic duties.

"J'aime bien mieux, pour moi, qu'en épluchant ses herbes
Elle accommode mal les noms avec les verbes,
Et redise cent fois un bas ou méchant mot,
Que de brûler ma viande, ou saler trop mon pot.
Je vis de bonne soupe, et non de beau langage."
Molière, Les Femmes Savantes, Act II, Sc. VII, 262.

above a Pertelote-like display of the medical knowledge thought so proper to a woman for centuries in England. (i) Indeed with singular success, they managed to combine the traditional domestic usefulness of the Englishwoman with an honest interest in the things of the mind. They were, one and all, avid readers. They were, one and all inveterate scribblers. To read their voluminous correspondence is to feel that somehow sluice gates long shut have been opened and a tremendous flood released. The flood carried with it much earth and many stones, much rubble; but the great thing to observe is that gates long-shut were opened and women as a sex began to read and to use the written word as a natural medium of expression.(ii) But I am anticipating. That their natural impulse was to talk about their new-found interests, is not at all surprising. We are so surfeited with printed words that it is difficult for us to realise the thrill of books to those eighteenth century men and women. In a measure books, and particularly novels, were to the eighteenth century what films have been to the twentieth century, with the difference that their book-fare was very sparse as compared with our superabundant film-fare. To realise something of this new-found delight one has only to read the letters of the day for one senses immediately there

(i) Their letters and diaries would be of considerable assistance to the compiler of an 18th Century medical text book, and to the ordinary reader, there is a quaint fascination about the use of crabs' eyes, a spider in a goose-quill sealed and being hung about the neck, asses' milk, calves' pluck water, boluses etc.

(ii) Outstanding individual women e.g. Dorothy Osborne had already done so.

the excitement with which the Bluestockings and their contemporaries read Clarissa or Sir Charles Grandison or Evelina or Cecilia. "My heart was almost broke with her [Clarissa's] frenzy, but that scene afterwards composed and revived my spirits, and made me almost rejoice in her distress," wrote Mrs. Delany. (i) And she and her friend the Duchess of Portland laughed and wept over Cecilia. Mrs. Chapone, "did not cry at all; I was in an agitation that half-killed me, that shook all my nerves, and made me unable to sleep at nights, from the suspense I was in: but I could not cry, for excess of eagerness". (ii) Men would sit up all night reading novels and the names of Clarissa and Harriet and Mme. Duval and Mr. Smith were household words.

And in all their activity as housewives or as letter-writers, as wives or as friends, one is constantly surprised by the sterling good sense of the Bluestockings, for they were typical of an age the ruling temper of which was rational. It is implicit in what has been already indicated, in their whole approach to life, in their insistence on its meaning and their protests against the extravagancies of mere fashion. It enables them to face life with great balance and equanimity, so that they rode high over its storms. So young Mary Granville (later Delany) faced with a revolting proposal of marriage to an uncouth red-faced boor of sixty cried her heart

(i) Autobiography, II, 598.

(ii) Burney, Diary, II, 200.

out, and then summoned all her resources to make the best of a very difficult situation. Likewise Mrs. Thrale, when her husband was enamoured of the ravishing Sophy Streatfield, swallowed her pride and conducted herself with admirable restraint. So Hester Chapone, ten months a bride, crushed by the death of her husband, steadied herself and devoted herself to a life of great usefulness. Instances could be multiplied. But the most striking example of Bluestocking good-sense seems to me to be in Mrs. Chapone's Letter to a New Married Lady. Couched in slightly old-fashioned terms, there are ideas in it that might become a modern text-book on marriage. It is a counsel of marriage good-sense. The happiest marriages, Mrs. Chapone maintains, are those where there is a basis of solid friendship, the sharing and cultivating of common interests. Personal habits are of paramount importance in the day to day intercourse of life. Therefore, she comments "avoid everything that can create a moment's disgust towards either your person or your mind". (1) She stresses the importance of tact in the handling of the mother-in-law. Where good sense is concerned, nothing in the Letter is out-of-date, although in dealing with matters such as conjugal unfaithfulness, Mrs. Chapone tends to reveal her typical eighteenth century conviction of the husband's superiority.

But perhaps the most attractive quality the Bluestockings

(1) Letter to a New-Married Lady, 1777, 14.

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had in common was their companionableness, their sociability. Man, they believed, found his sanity in the society of his fellow creatures. Mrs. Chapone's niece was to qualify herself by all means in her power "for an useful and agreeable member of society". It was this quality too which made them love London with all its rich opportunities of friendship. So strong was this faith in man's need of company and their love of company for its own sake, that the Blue-stockings repeated over and over again in their letters their joyful anticipation of Heaven as a society. Whatever losses had to be sustained this side of time, they could all be borne by the faith that looked through death to "the brighter and warmer radiance of an unchangeable and everlasting society". (i) What better bliss than "to be removed to the applauding society of saints and angels"? (ii) One wonders indeed if their conception of heaven were not, humanly enough, of a glorified Bluestocking Assembly, held in the presence of God. Conversation was the chief nourisher of this society and it was the genuine delight in the free exchange of ideas and opinions that made the Bluestockings quite contented with "libations of lemonade" for refreshment. Allied to their companionableness was a tremendous interest in people, most noted in Mrs. Thrale and Fanny Burney, but conspicuous in them

(i) Gilbert West to Mrs. Montagu. Blunt. Climensson, II, 64.

(ii) M. Pennington, Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, 1816, 219.

all. The Bluestockings were then women of outstanding good sense who felt the need of more serious employments than the fashionable world allowed them. While maintaining the best traditions of Englishwomen as "wives, mothers and mistresses of families", they found an outlet for their mental abilities in the world of literature, in reading and writing and in discussing what they read and what they wrote amongst themselves and with men and women who shared their dissatisfaction with the "beau monde". Above all they were companionable and sociable.

Such then were their general characteristics. It is necessary also to consider their social, political, moral and religious outlook. And at the outset the assurance and poise of the Bluestockings in their opinions, is to be noted. In them there was no vacillation, no uncertainty, no bewilderment at the "nets of right and wrong". They knew where they were going. For them no

"Wandering between two worlds, one dead
The other powerless to be born".

Their tendency was to be conservative. (1) They accepted without questioning the social economy of the society of their day as divinely appointed. Most of them had personal

(1) "If some leant towards free thinking, the general tendency of the Johnson circle was harshly opposed to any revolutionary movements, and authors were satisfied with the creeds as with the institutions amid which they lived" Leslie Stephen, English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century, 194.

introductions to King George and Queen Charlotte and were most lavish in praise of their graciousness, their understanding and their consideration for their subjects. To inferiors and servants, the Bluestockings were just and often generous, but every man must be kept in his proper station. Intimacy and familiarity with those of low birth and education, as Mrs. Chapone points out in Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, (i) is above all things to be avoided. Hannah More puts the whole matter in verse:

"That some must be poorer this truth I will sing
Is a law of my Maker and not of my king
And the true Rights of Man and the life of his cause
Is not equal Possessions but equal just laws." (ii)

The attitude here expressed of course, became more clearly defined after the French Revolution, which, for the time being strengthened the roots of the English social structure. It is reflected in Mrs. Piozzi's Three Warnings to John Bull before he dies (1798): "England must reform or be lost; either the people must resolve unanimously to support the government, defend the Established Church, and amend their manners, or dire consequences would only follow." (iii) Unlike some of the outstanding women of the French salons, Mlle. Lespinasse, for

(i) Written for her niece.

(ii) Hannah More. "Will Chip's True Rights of Man", Poetical Works, 1816, 321.

(iii) See J. L. Clifford, Hester Lynch Piozzi, 1941, 396.

example, the Bluestockings had no great flair for politics. They had in general an instinctive feeling that politics were not for women; but as intelligent women they took a natural interest in what was going on round about them and it would have been extraordinary if such tremendous movements as The American and French Revolutions had passed over their heads. Throughout their letters there are casual but often acute comments on contemporary politics. Mrs. Carter's Letters indeed, contain more than casual references. She sympathised strongly with Burke over both the American and French upheavals. One interesting comment from Mrs. Montagu on the governmental weakness in the handling of the American problem will indicate the kind of reference one meets. When the Ministers heard of the hurly-burly in America over the Stamp Act: "Some took hartshorn, some assafetida, but none took the grand specific in such maladies, a firm resolution... Then they all went into the country to eat their Christmas pies; some for the sake of present ease could have swallowed with them the affronts from America; others were high stomached and could not digest them. Holidays passed, then came working days indeed. The King's speech was firm, it pleased the hearts of oak... A day was named for taking this great affair into consideration; on that day Mr. Pitt came up from Bath. He talked of liberty, of natural liberty, and he loved liberty and liberty loved him and I know not what...Mr. Grenville talked of laws, and quoted the statutes in favour of the legality of the Stamp Act. Mr. Pitt

bid him not tell him of dogs' eared, double down acts of Parliament. He was for natural liberty, and he was for repeating the Stamp Act, it appeared" (1) The French Revolution, as might be expected shook and shocked the Blue-stockings to the core. Mrs. Carter found it "a tissue of injustice, impiety and rebellion against lawful government." (11)

Morally the Bluestockings were rigid in their acceptance of the traditional Christian standards and at least in the case of Mrs. Delany, Mrs. Thrale and Mrs. Vesey their sexual morality was hard put to the test by loathsome or unfaithful husbands. But on every hand there is evidence of the unbending strictness of the majority. Indeed in a gossiping century, when scandal abounded in the fashionable world, the only serious accusation was against Mrs. Vesey, for a flirtation with Laurence Sterne. But Mrs. Vesey's married life must have been torment in some respects. And while perhaps the moral standards of the Bluestockings seem almost prudishly rigid to us, we have to remember the flagrant morals of some elements of the fashionable world of their day. In a sense their standards were a protest against popular licentiousness, and they were sound to the core. With one voice they decried Chesterfield's Letters to His Son (1774). They all appreciated the "elegance of behaviour" there depicted, but the foundations of the code were to them utterly rotten. To Mrs. Carter, the

(1) Blunt, I, 138..

(11) Memoirs, 444, ff.

Letters spelt French - and therefore much distrusted - morality.

Mrs. Delany and Mrs. Montagu alike, with their richer acquaintance with the world of fashion, appreciated the sound advice as to "indefatigable and continual labour" and as to the courses of study recommended for an aspiring diplomat; but they deplored the duplicity and immorality counselled. To the Bluestockings real grace of deportment sprang from grace of heart without which all external accomplishments were mere "rouge and enamel". (i) Closely connected, indeed inseparable from their moral convictions was their reforming, missionary tendency. They were all improving women and deeply conscious of the importance of each individual's influence for good or ill. "There is not a man who drinks his pot of porter at the ale-house," said Mrs. Chapone "but has somebody who looks up to his opinion, and whose manners and conduct may be influenced by his sentiments." (ii)

On paper all the Bluestockings would have subscribed without hesitation to the orthodox Protestant faith. Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Chapone, Mrs. Thrale and Hannah More were laborious

(i) Writing to Dr. Beattie Mrs. Montagu reported Johnson's criticism of Chesterfield's Instructions to His Son, saying they would "teach the manners of a dancing-master, with the morals of a prostitute." (W. Forbes, Beattie, II, 63). Boswell gives the criticism too: "They teach the morals of a whore and the manners of a dancing-master" (Life, I, 266). Morally, Dr. Johnson and the Bluestockings were of one accord.

(ii) "On Conversation." Miscellany, 1777, 38.

students of the Bible and all of them had an excellent knowledge of it. Voltaire, Rousseau and Hume, they regarded as subversive and pernicious preceptors. Johnson and Beattie, on the other hand, were considered champions of the Faith. Mrs. Thrale reports Mrs. Montagu as having said that, "if an angel was to give an Imprimatur, he would give it to none but Johnson," (i) and Beattie's Essay on Truth had a great ovation in the circle. (ii) But in practice they were all (iii) tainted with the Deism and Rationalism of their day, and it would be very easy to make unorthodox places in their expressed religious philosophy. The first thing to observe here is that they (iv) found it highly reasonable to believe. The pill of atheism was much harder for them to swallow than the pill of faith. Mrs. Carter wrote, "How much more worthy of infinite goodness (than any other system) is that system which proposes pardon to penitent guilt and reward to defective

(i) Thraliana, ed. C. C. Balderston, 1942, 34.

(ii) Sir Joshua Reynolds celebrated it in the well-known allegorical picture, now in Marischal College, Aberdeen, where Beattie clasping the Essay sits serenely triumphant over against the enemies of Truth, Scepticism etc., the figure of an angel above, holding the scales of justice heavily weighted in his favour.

(iii) Hannah More freed herself from these influences, under the more impelling influence of the Evangelical Revival.

(iv) Mrs. Vesey seems to have been the only one seriously beset with doubts. Mrs. Carter did her utmost to dispel these doubts and her biographer tells us she did it with success.

goodness; which exacts no more from an erring and fallible nature than a sincere endeavour to rectify its disorders, and a constant progress towards the perfection which is reserved for it under happier circumstances of its being. Could a scheme like this which had escaped all the good sense of Socrates, the vivid spirit of Plato, and the deep penetration of Aristotle, be the mere invention of a few unreasoning and unlettered fishermen? And is there any article of faith proposed in the Gospel that contains a difficulty equal to such a supposition?" (i) That expression of faith is rational and orthodox. But when Mrs. Chapone, arguing against the dangers of enthusiasm asserted that we arrive at the conclusion that there must be one self-existent Being from the deductions of reason and not from revelation, she was being both rationally and deistically unorthodox. She goes on, "When we contemplate the Supreme Being, we must trace His attributes one by one: and even thus we must gather from mere mortal things, our notions of these attributes" (ii)

The Bluestocking approach to Nature is everywhere tinged with Deism. There is a typical passage in Mrs. Montagu's Letters with a very Addisonian flavour: "For some time after sunset, the hemisphere glowed with purple light, then faded to a silver-grey. When the night began 'to hang out her golden lamps' with

(i) Letters from Mrs. Carter to Mrs. Vesey, (1819), III, 8.

(ii) "Of Enthusiasm and Indifference in Religion", Miscellanies, (1777), 44. The underlining is mine.

great attention, I watched the rising of every star till the whole heaven glowed with living sapphires. Then I chose to consider them no longer as glowing gems, but lost myself in worlds beyond worlds and system beyond system, till my mind rose to the great Maker of them all". (1) There is room for both rationalism and deism in orthodox Christian philosophy, but not if these are held to the exclusion of revelation and therefore of mysticism. In practice the Bluestockings were rationalistic, suspicious of the mystical. What is mystical tends to be enthusiastic and enthusiasm can be a blinding force. It is natural therefore that their religion was nowhere - except of course in Hannah More - rapturous or intensely personal. There was more of God the Creator, albeit the loving, Fatherly Creator (for no reasonable man could conceive the Creator of such a world as a tyrant), than of God the Saviour. And Redemption, when they did mention it was systematised and legalised. It was not "felt in the blood and felt along the heart" but grasped by the reasoning mind. The Bluestockings' religious tolerance was characteristic of their century and it went hand-in-hand with deep convictions. It was expressed most clearly in Mrs. Carter's and Mrs. Montagu's attitude to Roman Catholicism on their continental Tour, and in Hannah More's activities on behalf of the oppressed French clergy at the time of the Revolution.

(1) The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, ed. M. Montagu, (1809-13), IV, 265-6.

Finally the Bluestockings were all convinced of the transitoriness of this earthly life, and they all had an extraordinarily sure hope of immortality. On the question of immortality they became almost lyrical. One quotation from Mrs. Chapone will illustrate for them all: "Think what it must be...to be admitted into the society of amiable and happy beings, all united in the most perfect peace and friendship, all breathing nothing but love to God, and to each other... free from every pain and care, and from all possibility of change or satiety: but above all to enjoy the more immediate presence of God himself...but here all imagination fails. We must content ourselves with believing that it is what 'mortal eye hath not seen nor ear heard neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.' The crown of all our joys will be to know that we are secure of possessing them forever. What a transporting idea!" (1) And there we leave them in their "solemn troops and sweet societies".

(1) Improvement of the Mind, (1817), 55.

ELIZABETH MONTAGU.

(1720-1800)

THE QUEEN OF THE BLUESTOCKINGS.

"She considers her title as indisputable most probably, though I am sure I never heard her urge it. Queen Elizabeth, you remember, would not suffer hers to be inquired into, and I have read somewhere that the Great Mogul is never crowned."

Mrs. Thrale. From Abraham Hayward, Autobiography, Letters and Literary Remains of Mrs. Piozzi, (1861, 1st edn.), I, 319-20.

Happy was the man or woman who received a neat little card of invitation to dine with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale of Streatham Park. Whoever dined at Streatham not only enjoyed an excellent dinner, capped with the choicest fresh fruit - peaches, nectarines, grapes, pineapples, melons - and crowned with the finest wines, but mingled in the best society that London afforded in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Not only might Fanny Burney or Sir Joshua Reynolds or David Garrick and his charming Austrian wife be of the company, but the great Dr. Johnson himself would probably be there. At Streatham Park, the conversation was always spirited, for Mrs. Thrale was a hostess who could make the dullest places shine. Talk was by no means always intellectual or serious, for Hester Lynch Thrale might be feeling in a mood for "nonsense" and suggest a game such as the game of comparing the circle of Streatham acquaintances to flowers or colours, to dress materials, or as on the day that concerns us, to courses on the menu.⁽¹⁾ Into these games came inevitably the name of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, the sun in the English social firmament between 1760 and 1790, and on this occasion, it was agreed that she would be "Soup à la Reine". Soup came first on the Eighteenth Century menu; but it is the queenly qualification that is important, for this

(1) This was the game that Goldsmith played so superbly in Retaliation.

regal dignity in Mrs. Montagu made a deep impression on both Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale. One day, she was showing Dr. Johnson some old china plates that had belonged to Queen Elizabeth. His comment was that they had "suffered little diminution of dignity in falling to her." (i) When Mrs. Montagu's brown hair was white with time, Mrs. Thrale confided to Thraliana: "Mrs. Montagu and Queen Elizabeth rather gain than lose admiration when their heads are white as is Snowdonia's snow." (ii) And was it not Dr. Johnson himself who called her, if with a grain of malice, "Queen of the Blue-stockings"? (iii)

Queens are generally trained for their office. Nature and circumstances combined to hasten the maturity of Elizabeth Robinson and to give her the poise and distinction which enthroned her in English society for thirty, if not forty, years of a century singularly rich in personalities. Born in 1720, she came mid-way in a talented and lively family of seven brothers and two sisters, and many were the uproarious arguments that an able and spirited mother - the blood of the

(i) Hayward, (rev. Lobban), 136.

(ii) Thraliana, 971.

(iii) Burney, Diary II, 236.

Drakes of Devon and of the Robertsons of Struan, Perthshire, flowed in her veins - had to control. (1) But the factor that ripened the young Elizabeth mentally more than any other was the family relationship to Dr. Conyers Middleton, the brilliant rationalist theologian of Trinity College, Cambridge. Elizabeth's maternal grandmother became his second wife and in their house she was a frequent and very popular guest. Her sprightly mind fascinated the clever don who used to allow her to be present at learned discussions amongst his intellectual friends. Afterwards, he would take delight in catechizing her and wonder at her retentive memory and her precocious mind. She was indeed extraordinarily aware of what was going on round about her. So penetrating were her young blue eyes that when she was just thirteen, she suspected that Dr. Conyers Middleton was about to marry for the third time. He was then fifty, the lady twenty-five. The gap in age did not escape Elizabeth's tongue: "I suspected his designs when he made so many complaints in London that it was so difficult to find a maid who understood making jellies and sack posset which he and a certain doctor used to have for their suppers... though I don't doubt he always takes care to show her the side of his face which Mr. Doll says is younger by ten years than the other, yet that is rather too old to be a match for twenty-five, which I

(1) Mrs. Robinson was educated according to the system of Mrs. Makin, to whom reference has already been made.

believe is the age of Mrs. Place." (i) Moreover she made her fashionable début at a very tender age. At twelve, she attended the Canterbury Races and an assembly after them. At fifteen she had an early taste of the gay whirl at Tunbridge Wells, a favourite haunt with her ever after. Dancing she loved so passionately, that she confided to the first of many distinguished correspondents that she must have been "bit by a tarantula." (ii) Her early social experiences in fact, culminated and culminated in her friendship with this 'distinguished correspondent', who was no other than Lady Margaret Cavendish Harley, Prior's "noble, lovely, little Peggy", for the Lady Margaret was to Elizabeth socially, what Dr. Conyers Middleton was to her intellectually. By her, she was introduced to the fashionable society of the day, gaining thereby not only an eager interest in clothes, but an almost astonishing measure of womanly experience. In July, 1734, Lady Margaret became the Duchess of Portland and when Elizabeth was but seventeen, she was invited to be with her at her first confinement. For this, she required a new suit of "cloathes", for she was to receive all visits for the Duchess and that meant receiving "all the people of quality of both sexes that are in London". (iii) Her indulgent father sent her £20

(i) Climenson, I, 10. For a considerable part of the 18th C. 'Mistress' was used of single women, 'the brevet rank of matron'; but 'Miss' was well established by the beginning of the 19th C.

(ii) Letters, I, 27.

(iii) Climenson, I, 23.

with which she bought a very handsome "Du Cape". (i)

In the same letter she added, "Pray send me by Tom the figured dimity that was left of my upper coat, for it is too narrow and too short for my present hoop, which is of the first magnitude." (ii) At eighteen, she wrote to the Duchess with advice about a wet nurse: "Item for the wet-nurse after the chickenpox that she may become new milch again, a handful of camomile flowers, a handful of pennyroyal, boiled in white wine and sweetened with treacle, to be taken at going to rest". (iii)

And so before her marriage Elizabeth Montagu, the Queen of the Bluestockings, is seen in the Elizabeth Robinson kernel. Three factors deserve special attention. There is first the social ambition. Secondly, there is the hard core of good sense which was to be both pilot and anchor to her all through life. So, at Bath, she laughed at the emptiness of the conversation. In the Coffee House, all talk was of "the rheumatism in the shoulder, the sciatica in the hip, and the gout in the toe"; (iv)

(i) Ducape was "a plain-wove stout silk fabric", the manufacture of which was introduced by the French refugees of 1685 (O.E.D.). The transference of the name of the material to the garment made therefrom was common in the 18th Century, e.g. Queen Charlotte presented Fanny Burney with "a lilac tabby" i.e. with a lilac taffeta gown. The usage is common in modern colloquial speech. Cf. "my wine velvet" for "my wine velvet frock".

(ii) Climenson, I, 24-5.

(iii) Ibid., I, 28.

(iv) Ibid., I, 39.

and of card-playing and the dull social round, she wrote " 'How d'ye do?' is all one hears in the morning, and 'What's trumps?' in the afternoon". (i) Here surely is the voice of the future Bluestocking whose assemblies would one day unite social and intellectual brilliance. The third of the aforesaid factors deserving attention is the practical rather than the romantic approach to marriage. To the Duchess of Portland, Elizabeth wrote: "Gold is the chief ingredient in the composition of worldly happiness. Living in a cottage on love is certainly the worst diet and the worst habitation one can find out. As for modern marriages they are great infringers of the baptismal vow; for 'tis commonly the pomps and vanities of the wicked world on one side and the simple lust of the flesh on the other side. For my part when I marry, I do not intend to enlist entirely under the banner of Cupid or Plutus, but take prudent consideration and decent inclination for my advisers; I like a coach and six extremely, but a strong apprehension of repentance would not suffer me to accept it from many who possess it". (ii) Such an attitude was satisfactory for Elizabeth though she came to grief when she tried to impose it on others. (iii)

(i) Climenson, I, 39

(ii) Ibid., I, 42-43.

(iii) Outstandingly in the case of the attractive Dorothy Gregory, daughter of Dr. John Gregory, Professor of Philosophy in Edinburgh University, who married a cousin of the Robinsons. She lived with Mrs. Montagu for long periods after Mr. Montagu's death and Mrs. Montagu hoped that Dorothy would marry her nephew and heir, but the warm-hearted Dorothy ran off with an impecunious clergyman. She was never quite forgiven. To the disappointment of Dorothy's friends, Mrs. Montagu left her at death, only a mourning ring. Lady Louisa Stuart, Gleanings from an old Portfolio, (1895-8) III, 60.

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Elizabeth had little in the way of formal education as a child, although she studied at home with her scholarly elder brothers. But in a sense her education was ideal, for it was the continuous education of an intelligent and avid reader who had easy access to a plentiful supply of books. She kept herself up to date with the literary activity of the day until her eyes were so weak that they could only read "the green volume of Nature." (i) To be thus au fait with contemporary literature was a great advantage in a salon hostess. The weakness of such an education was the lack of concentrated study, of languages for example. The Greek tragedians and other Greek and Latin authors she read in translation, but all her life she was to regret her ignorance of the classical languages. (ii) French she comprehended well, although Mme. Du Deffand found her accent "penible". (iii) She corresponded in Italian with Sir Archibald Bower, an ex-Jesuit priest, and Italian quotations frequently grace her letters. But Elizabeth Montagu was never a scholar. Her powers of application had a social rather than a literary bent and her literary activities as a rule,

(i) Blunt, II, 318.

(ii) Boswell quotes Dr. Johnson as saying of Mrs. Montagu "... she does not know Greek, and I fancy knows little Latin. She is willing you should think she knows them: but she does not say she does." Boswell, Life, III, 244.

(iii) Lettres à Horace Walpole, II. (1824,) III, 321.



went only so far as they would be useful to her socially. That does not mean that these activities lacked sincerity or even assiduity as the famous Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare will subsequently show: but she had not the scholar's build. Her chosen labours were the labours of the salon (i) rather than of the desk.

There are several portraits of Elizabeth Montagu as one would expect, in view of her central social position. Interesting as these are, one fails to find there the beauty attributed to her unless in the full-faced miniature by Zincke. (ii) Sir Joshua Reynolds and his sister Miss Frances Reynolds both painted her, and Joachim Smith moulded a medallion for Wedgwood and Bentley, in profile, all three works giving prominence to Elizabeth's least attractive feature, her long, sharp but intelligent nose. The portraits show the intensity of her blue eyes, the charm of well-arched brows, (iii), and testify

(i) Partly in protest against "the long labours of the toilet".

(ii) Reproduced in Climenson, I, (1906), and stated then to be in the possession of a descendant, Miss Montagu.

(iii) In this respect the Allan Ramsay portrait is disappointing. It is interesting to note that in four portraits including the delicate one of his wife in the National Gallery of Scotland, eyebrows are a very undetermined feature. It seems probable that like many other men, Allan Ramsay saw the woman he loved in all women, and that he transferred the characteristics of a feature harmonious to his wife's beauty, to the same feature in other women.

to an attractive head of brown hair. The mouth and chin are very small, neat and determined. Neither nose nor mouth is sensitive. The tapering hands are aristocratic and artistic, particularly in the portraits by Miss Reynolds and Allan Ramsay. Elizabeth was of medium height and most of her life very thin (she suffered seriously from "spasms in the stomach", a complaint which her persistent letter-writing tended to aggravate). In the Allan Ramsay portrait, the head looks almost too small, as contrasted with the full-skirted old-rose dress. Be all this as it may, the Queen of the Bluestockings was not without physical attractiveness. The conclusion therefore is that her beauty lay rather in the grace and vivacity of her manner than in her features. Like Mrs. Thrale, she seems to have been a woman of tireless spirit - her body was a frail vessel - and that quality of tirelessness of spirit is a most useful and enviable quality in a woman, a necessary quality in a society Queen. As a young girl she was so seldom still that the Duchess of Portland nicknamed her "Fidget."

It has already been said that Elizabeth's approach to marriage was practical rather than romantic, but it must be remembered that she was brought up in a practical tradition characteristic of the upper classes in her day. Good parents in these days sought for a man of wealth and character and there was no difficulty in securing the sensible Elizabeth's acceptance of her parents' choice, the wealthy Edward Montagu. (1)

(1) M.P. for Huntingdon, he was grandson of the great Earl of Sandwich, Lord High Admiral of the Fleet to Charles II.

He was a man of great integrity of character, a wealthy land and coal-owner. Although he was 29 years her senior and the marriage was arranged, it was a happy one, partly perhaps because Elizabeth was not expecting romance. The relationship was one of very deep mutual respect and admiration as their letters usually addressed, "My Dearest" or "My Dearest Life" indicate. Their affection would probably have been deeper had they not lost their first and only child John - "Punch", as he was called- at the age of fifteen months. Edward's seniority made obedience an easy matter for the reasonable Elizabeth in the early years of the marriage. She never then doubted that wives should obey their husbands, ⁽¹⁾ but constantly deferred to his wishes in matters of small and great moment. Ever socially-minded, Elizabeth made her greatest sacrifice on behalf of her husband's political principles for, as a Whig and yet a member of the Opposition he did not attend the Court and he desired her not to attend. And so for twenty years Elizabeth and Edward Montagu had a very genuine comradeship. He used to confide in her about his Parliamentary and other business, and he was proud of her literary successes. When Edinburgh fell to the Jacobites in 1745 and he was in the North on business :

(1) In 1782, after Mr.Montagu's death, she indicated that she had always believed obedience to be a wifely duty but that "to have a new master" after one's own opinions and habits were formed" would be no easy matter.

Letter to Eliza Carter, Blunt, II, 119-120.

at his estate in Allerthorpe, Yorkshire, she wrote tenderly from the South, offering to join her husband. He was much touched by her courage and loyalty, but he insisted that she go to her family home at Mt. Morris in Kent. In 1758, when Mrs. Montagu had a serious fainting fit, excited maidservants in a desperate effort to revive her, poured eau-de-luce (i) over her eyes nose and mouth nearly killing her. Edward Montagu was frantic lest he would lose her and she tells us that he then showed her "the most passionate love imaginable." (ii) Elizabeth, like Mrs. Thrale was a most useful wife. Her husband was clever but lazy (iii) and latterly she took over a large share of responsibility in running his farms, estates, and collieries, gaining thereby experience which stood her in good stead when they became her own property at his death.

But as Elizabeth grew older and more defined in personality obedience naturally became a more irksome duty, and the discrepancy in age began to tell. (iv) From 1760 or so, when her

(i) Strong sal ammoniac and quicklime.
(ii) Climenson II, 144. William Pitt, then Secretary of State wrote congratulating her on her recovery.
(iii) Elizabeth's father was clever and perhaps more lazy. The husband-father likeness often remarked on is interesting here because the husband was not of the lady's choice.
(iv) Boswell's London Journal (April 1772) reports part of the conversation at one of Mrs. Montagu's dinner-parties, -Mr. Montagu being absent. Mrs. Montagu "found fault with some kind of husbandry where they sow wheat and barley, as I think, together. 'Because', said she, 'they are not ripe at the same time.' Said the Archbishop of York : 'We see many such kind of marriages.' The truth is Mrs. Montagu's own marriage was of that kind. Her husband is much older than she. They have not been ripe at the same time." Malahide Papers, ix, 82.

husband was seventy, Elizabeth's letters to her sister Sarah Scott indicate that she had learned domestic diplomacy. For example, when Lord Bath proposed a holiday with the Montagu's at Spa, she wrote: "Last Sept. when my Lord Bath was at Sandleford, I started the thought of going to Spa instead of Tunbridge this summer, which we all talked of some time with great alacrity, except Mr. Montagu, who prudently threw in ifs and buts, doubts and quandaries. As I never love to labour a point till the time comes near, I said no more of it: but my Lord Bath asked me before Christmas if I intended to go to Spa; I said indeed I had not so much as endeavoured it, the thing being at a distance. A little after Christmas his Lordship in a laughing manner attacked Mr. Montagu on the propriety or indeed necessity of my going to Spa for my health and less dislike was expressed than I expected, so now and then, tout doucement I used to say, "My dear, if we go to Spa -" to which my dear answered, "I have not told you that we shall go to Spa", (1) and so on, but as the spring advanced, Mr. Montagu gave his full consent. With the years, he became, not unexpectedly, more and more dependent on her and hated her to be away from him. But she managed him with persistent patience and wisdom, nursing him to the end, through much testiness (ii) although she was

(1) Blunt, I, 44.

(ii) Her sister Sarah sometimes feared he might disinherit her, but Elizabeth felt quite secure in her husband's esteem, despite his ill-temper.

strained physically and nervously, only relieving her worn-out nerves and spilling her pent-up feelings to her sister.

Mrs. Montagu's life was a very active one. Patroness of men-of-letters, salon-hostess, business manager of farms, estates and collieries, she not only made time to carry on a most voluminous correspondence but to indulge to a very great extent, an interest in house-planning and decorating. In this pursuit she was constantly occupied from the time of her marriage in 1742 until her death in 1800. By 1750 her Chinese Dressing Room at Hill St. in London was already famous. It was capable of holding no less than a hundred guests. In fact, several of the countries of 'the gorgeous East' and not China alone, contributed to the room's decoration. Elizabeth had two sailor brothers who had just returned from "Bengall" and Indian as well as Japanese ornaments contributed to the atmosphere of a room which she herself described, as being like the temple of some Indian god. In 1767, when the great Robert Adam was her decorator, that room was transformed into the room of Cupidons which Mrs. Delany's ready tongue satirized: "How such a genius at her age and so circumstanced could think of painting the walls of her dressing-room with bowers of roses and jessamine, entirely inhabited by little cupids in all their wanton ways is astonishing! Unless she looks upon herself as the wife of Old Vulcan and mother of all these little loves". (1)

(1) Delany, Autobiography, iv, 508.

The same year the great "Athenian" Stuart decorated her bedroom at Sandleford. But the Hill Street house could not satisfy her ambitious soul. In 1777, she acquired a new lease of land in Portman Square to build for herself. Adam was to be the architect, but he kept her waiting an hour for an interview and altogether she was more favourably impressed with Stuart. (i) The house was a fine monument to a great Georgian craftsman until it received and absorbed the shattering energy of a 500 lb bomb in the London Blitz. Near the enormous portico there is now (ii) a large dingy air-raid shelter and emergency water-tank and these add desolation and ugliness to drooping, dripping shrubbery and smoke-stained, shattered walls. (iii) Feather-work had interested Elizabeth from her youthful days when she caught the enthusiasm from the Duchess of Portland. When she was only seventeen, the sailor brothers had been encouraged to bring home shells and feathers. There was a feather screen with six panels at Hill Street; but all earlier efforts of the kind were superseded by the decoration of the great Feather Room in Portman Square. In the early seventeen-eighties while

(i) He however drank heavily with his workmen and added considerably to her cares.

(ii) December, 1946.

(iii) There is seen a coloured drawing of 22, Portman Square by Hosmer Shepherd (1851) in the British Museum. Its value will naturally be much enhanced now.

"Capability Brown" was beautifying the surroundings of Sandleford Priory, her Berkshire home, Mrs. Montagu employed the wellknown architect James Wyatt to convert the old monk's chapel into a spacious dining-room. To connect that room with the main part of the house, a lovely octagonal drawing-room was designed. This became the feather-work factory and under the foremanship of a servant-woman called Betty Tull (1) feathers of peacocks and pheasants and geese, of macaws and kingfishers were transformed into beautiful tapestries to be used in the reception room at Chateau Portman, as contemporaries named No. 22, Portman Square. Cowper made the laborious work immortal in a characteristic and delightful poem:

The birds put off their ev'ry hue
 To dress a room for Montagu.
 The Peacock sends his heav'nly dyes,
 His rainbow and his starry eyes:
 The Pheasant, plumes which round infold
 His mantling neck with downy gold;
 The Cock his arch'd tail's azure show,
 And river-blanch'd, the Swan his snow.
 All tribes beside of Indian name
 That glossy shine or vivid flame,
 Where rises, and where sets the day,
 Whate'er they boast of rich or gay,
 Contribute to the gorgeous plan,
 Proud to advance it all they can.
 This plumage, neither dashing show'r
 Nor blasts that shake the dripping bow'r,

(1) Of Betty Tull Mrs. Montagu wrote: "Macaws she has transformed into tulips, kingfishers into bluebells by her so potent art". Blunt, II, 228.

Shall drench again or discompose,
But, screened from every storm that blows,
It wears a splendour ever new,
Safe with protecting Montagu.." (i)

The feather tapestries were not the room's only ornament.

A whole army of architects, sculptors, carvers, gilders, painters, carpenters worked on the verd-antique pillars, the Angelica Kaufmann ceiling, the Bonomi sculpture and the Rebecca doorway panellings in chiaroscuro. Mrs. Montagu entered the house in Dec.^{December,} 1781, but the feather work was not completed till 1791, and at this time she wrote to Mrs. Scott: "I am going to the City end of the town this morning to bespeak 280 yards of white satin for the window curtains of my great house, and about 200 for the hangings.. I am also to have a very large quantity of white lutestring for the octagon drawing-room at Sandleford. (ii) She was then seventy years of age and hugely delighted by the visit of the Queen and six Princesses to see "my great house". She wrote to good Eliza Carter (who was a little uneasy about Mrs. Montagu's social ambitions, but utterly loyal in her friendship), "The newspaper would tell you all that is worth hearing about my breakfast on Monday. The honour and the delight I received

(i) "On Mrs. Montagu's Feather Hangings", Poetical Works, Oxford edn. (1934), 380-1.

(ii) Blunt, 246. Lutestring was a heavy lustrous silk material very popular as a dress-material in the second half of the eighteenth century.

by her Majesty's and the Princesses' visit, no pen can describe, no paper contain." (i) But Mrs. Montagu could not rest from designing and planning. By 1790 her nephew, Matthew Robinson Montagu (whom she had made her heir, and who had taken her name) was living with his wife and family at Sandleford Priory. Reginald Blunt says: "Mrs. Montagu junior "bred" in the phrase of the day, with praiseworthy regularity once a year (ii) and so new nurseries had to be designed at Hill Street and at Sandleford. In 1795, Mrs. Montagu met a certain Sir Benjamin Thompson, Count von Rumford, "a man of many schemes and reforms for the promotion of fireside comfort, improved cookery, economic fuel, better clothing, and other delectable articles of faith", (iii) and so she engaged him to improve some of her fireplaces. Elizabeth Montagu called herself "the old Abbess of Sandleford," (iv) and indeed, in her building schemes and in her capable management of her business affairs, she bears comparison with the great Anglo-Saxon abbesses.

(i) Blunt, II, 258. A week later she was visited by Horace Walpole whose comment on "Mrs. Montagu's new Palace" is interesting: "Instead of vagaries, it is a noble, simple edifice, when I came home I recollected that though I had thought it so magnificent a house, there was not a morsel of gilding. It is grand, not tawdry, nor larded and embroidered and pomponned with shred and remnants, and cliquant like all the harlequinades of Adam, which never let the eye repose a moment." Letters, xii, 166

(ii) Blunt, II, 292.

(iii) Ibid., II, 320.

(iv) Ibid., II, 209.

As an accomplished and unwearied hostess, as a patroness of letters and the arts, Mrs. Montagu achieved a phenomenal pre-eminence in the second half of the 18th Century. In that capacity she will come under discussion with the Bluestocking Assemblies. For the moment we must consider what kind of woman she was, this Queen of the Bluestockings. And that is a very difficult question to answer, for although references to her abound in the Memoirs and Letters of the day we have little intimate knowledge of her. Mrs. Thrale and Fanny Burney have left us diaries. Imagination can bring them almost uncannily near. Elizabeth Montagu has left us no diary, and while her letters are voluminous she was what the modern psychologist would call an extrovert, and like many an extrovert she was probably a lonely woman, for all the dazzle of her public life. Biographers have tended to accept too readily the idea that she was incapable of falling in love. The springs of her being are as secret as those of Mrs. Thrale's are public. And she must have been just as inscrutable to most of her contemporaries as she is to us. But her public life is an open book. She had not the 'softness' and the 'sweet attractive grace' of the womanly Mrs. Thrale. That is probably what Fanny Burney meant when she described her as "a character rather to respect than to love", for she continued, "she has not that don d'aime by which alone love can be made good or faithful". (1) And yet this woman was the real friend of

(1) Diary, I, 462.

Burke and Garrick. William Pitt called her "the most perfect woman he had ever met with". (i) Amongst her chosen friends she numbered not only "the poet and saint", Gilbert West, Sir Archibald Bower, the Scottish ex-Jesuit (who called her "Madonna"), and Dr. Messenger Monsey, but also William Pulteney, Earl of Bath, George Lord Lyttelton, James Beattie and Lord Kaimes. Dr. Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, David Hume and Allan Ramsay, to mention only the most outstanding amongst others, had a considerable appreciation of her excellent qualities. She had, in fact, the highest principles combined with a measure of common sense that amounted to brilliance. Unlike Eliza Carter, Elizabeth Montagu was not naturally pious, but from her early days she had a great respect for genuine goodness. From the age of thirty when she came under the influence of her cousin Gilbert West, her actions were ever more constantly governed by religious standards. West's influence was wholesome, for his character was mellow. The saintly man had a very good sense of humour and excellent artistic taste. (ii) Subsequently, Mrs. Montagu became a kind of social champion^P of the Faith against current scepticism and rationalism. Had her early influences been

(i) Climenson, II, 30.

(ii) William Pitt and Lord Lyttelton were both frequent guests at his house at Wickham, where were good reading, good dining and wining, and excellent conversation, the entertainment above all to the cultured eighteenth century man.

otherwise she might have been a female Lord Chesterfield.(1)
Her generosity was well-known. Hers was the first, or almost the first name on every subscription list. Begging letters of every kind besieged her door. There is a delightful letter from Garrick after he had received five guineas from her for an unspecified charity. He mentioned that a certain nobleman "who looks benevolence itself" had contributed five shillings and goes on: "your two names like a fat and lean rabbit in a poulterer's shop stand thus together -

Mrs. Montagu £5.5.- no ticket
Rt.Honourable Lord W.de B. 5s- one ticket." (11)

Few genuine requests were refused and requests were not always necessary. James Beattie had told Mrs. Montagu of the straitened circumstances of a Mrs. Arbuthnot of Aberdeen (who had married a cousin of the Dr. Arbuthnot of Pope's Epistle) and of her heroic struggle to make ends meet. Mrs. Montagu persuaded her to accept an annuity. Beattie she assisted materially too. On one occasion when sending £100 for Montagu Beattie, his son and her godson and namesake, she wrote interestingly on the

(1) On the publication of Chesterfield's letters in 1774 she wrote to Mrs. Vesey and indicated how much she had in common with Lord Chesterfield on the side of practical wisdom. It was his morals that shocked her: "... all he says on the importance and value of time, and his exhortations to indefatigable and continual application are excellent...The course of study he points out and the objects of observation he recommends to persons who wish to serve as Foreign Ministers deserve the utmost attention from all who could fill such employments. But when he recommends adultery under the soft term of gallant arrangement, when he recommends the selfish system of a French bel esprit in morals, and the trickishness of chef de parti in politics, he becomes a pernicious preceptor." Blunt, I, 284-5.

(11) Ibid., II, 359.

subject of money. Rousseau's idea that the poor should not accept charity from the rich caused quite a stir in England.(1) She wrote thus: "I do not see why the same principle that should make me disdain to receive a pecuniary benefit from a person richer than myself should not make me equally disdain to receive instruction from some other person who is wiser than myself. From good authority we are told wisdom is better than gold, but Jean Jacques Rousseau is not of that opinion or he would not accept the one and reject the other. Milton, who had a more enlarged mind, makes use of the phrase acceptance bounteous. I have ever admired the expression, for the niggard, cold unfriendly heart refuses to receive, from principles that in another situation would decline to give." (ii) As might be expected her generosity was often criticised because, it was said, she acted from motives of vanity. Dr. Johnson, who made more than one appeal to her charity, gave the best reply to that criticism: "I have seen no beings who do so much good from benevolence, as she does from whatever motive...to act from pure benevolence is not possible for finite beings. Human benevolence is mingled with vanity, interest or some other motive." (iii)

But Mrs. Montagu had two great weaknesses: a love of power

(1) Mrs. Delany had refused a legacy from the Duchess of Portland and Mrs. Montagu thought she had been influenced by Rousseau. M.Forbes, Beattie, 212.

(ii) Ibid. Beattie and His Friends. (1904), 246.

(iii) Life, Boswell, III, 48.

and a love of social success. Her personality was strong and progressively dominating, and she lacked the more delicate shades of understanding. Clashes inevitably came. She quarrelled with her sister Sarah and with the Duchess of Portland over Sarah's choice of husband. (i) She quarrelled with Dorothy Gregory as has been already mentioned, for a like reason. In old age she was a little tyrannical. One day, Matthew Montagu, her nephew and heir then in residence at Sandleford with his family, knocked too loudly at the door. She sent him "a reproving message by the servant and bid him stay till he had a door of his own to knock at so." (ii) Her closest friends deplored her inordinate love of finery, (iii) her insatiable desire for publicity and her love of money. There are indications in Fanny Burney's Diary (iv) that in her earlier years Mrs. Montagu had cultivated a distinguished air and manner. Mrs. Thrale went so far as to say she was prouder of her coalpits than of her knowledge. (v) And yet she could be a most excellent com-

(i) Mrs. Montagu's judgment was right on this occasion, as indeed it often was, for Sarah's marriage to George Lewis Scott, sub-preceptor to the Prince of Wales, afterwards George III, was a very unhappy one. Still it was the imposition of her will that was unbearable.

(ii) Thraliana, 412.

(iii) "Hester Lynch Thrale:..you who love magnificence won't quarrel with her, as everybody else does, for her love of finery."

Dr. Johnson: No, I shall not quarrel with her upon that topic. "Burney, Diary I, 116.

(iv) I, 120.

(v) Thraliana, 1092.

panion. Wandering over the Berkshire Downs with Eliza Carter, sauntering through the Blair Drummond estates in Perthshire with Lord Kaimes, chatting at her own fireside with Lord Lyttelton and the Beatties, driving by the riverside at Richmond with Lord Bath on a summer evening, she was her most natural self. Her closer friendships with great men of the day are indeed deserving of attention, for they reveal some of the qualities that have been thrown into the shadows by the brilliance of her public life: her graciousness, her loyalty, her companionableness.

The most outstanding of all these friendships was that with William Pulteney, 1st Earl of Bath, whom Lecky describes as "probably the most graceful and most brilliant speaker in the House of Commons between the withdrawal of St. John and the appearance of Pitt." (i) This friendship began when Bath was seventy-six years of age and Elizabeth Montagu forty, and for four years continued with unabated zeal. Bath was in many respects a disappointed man. The one-time friend and colleague of Walpole was driven into violent opposition by Walpole's failure to make use of his abilities. Accused of sordid motives he "incautiously pledged himself never again to accept office" (ii) and by accepting a peerage shut himself out from the House, which he might have led on Walpole's downfall, and from popular

(i) W.E.H. Lecky, A History of England in the Eighteenth Century, (1892), I, 438.

(ii) Ibid., 439.

sympathy. Once or twice he tried to regain his earlier popularity and influence, but his political days were done. Nor was his domestic life happy. His wife was a notorious "screw" (i) but her death in 1758 was a deliverance. A wealthy peer, a good sportsman, a keen card-player, a man of wit, he found in the last four years of his life some solid satisfaction in the friendship of the brilliant Elizabeth Montagu. There were frequent meetings, in London, at Sandleford, at Lord Lyttelton's estate at Hagley, at Spa, at Tunbridge Wells; and Mr. and Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Carter joined Lord Bath on a continental tour in 1763. At other times, they seem to have written to each other by every post. Of course tongues wagged over the candles, but Elizabeth wrote to Lord Bath with proud dignity: "I am ready to declare to the world that I never saw anything in it that I could love, esteem and honour even to veneration as I do my Lord Bath; if they can prove it to be sin or shame, to love the most aimiable and admire the most noble virtues and talents, let them put as much sin and shame to my account as they please". (ii) Dining at Lord Bessborough's House at Roehampton, Bath caught a severe chill in the summer of 1764. The bleeding, blistering and purging of the day made him rally a little, but he relapsed

(i) She is described in Miss Gaussen's book on Eliza Carter as "a lady who had such good intelligence in the 'Alley' with Gideon (the Portuguese Jew afterwards created Lord Eardly) and other stockbrokers, that her brother Colonel Gumley, called her dressing-room where her advisers congregated, the Jews' synagogue". (210).

(ii) Blunt, I, 93.

and died. The harmonious quality of the friendship is indicated by a letter written shortly after Bath's death. June was a hot month in the year 1764 - and in the long summer evenings, after the dust and heat of the London day, they would drive together to Kew and Richmond, sometimes stopping the chaise by the Riverside, to chat or to listen to the nightingales. They did not talk much. There was a security and an ease in the relationship that smoothed away the creases of life. But there was enough wit on both sides to keep the association from banality or dullness. Surely it was with those gracious summer evenings still vivid in her memory that Elizabeth wrote to Lord Lyttelton after Lord Bath's death: "In his society I found the delight one has in a summer evening; the heat and light of his meridian day were mitigated but not obscured; whatever of fervour was lost, was made up by sweetness and gentleness, and an animated tranquillity".⁽ⁱ⁾ Life was poorer for Mrs. Montagu afterwards. For four years she had known the pleasing affectionate warmth of a mellow sun. Now night had fallen. She was "forlorn and annihilated."⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

Nine years later she was to lose another friend who sought her company assiduously in his later life. This was the virtuous and learned, but somewhat ungainly and unprepossessing⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ George,

(i) Blunt, I, 110.

(ii) Ibid., I, 109.

(iii) "But, who is this astride the pony
So long, so lean, so lank, so bony?
Dat be de great orator Littletony."

Hayward, (1st edn), I, 26.

1st Lord Lyttelton, to whom, oddly enough, she had been attached as a young girl before his romantic marriage with Lucy Fortescue. But Lucy was long dead and his second marriage had been very unfortunate. Elizabeth was a most welcome guest at Hagley, as Lyttelton was at Sandleford, and at Hill Street. Scandal was busy again of course and the Abbot of Strawberry was delighted to pass it on. He reported Mrs. Montagu's sixteen-year old postillion as declaring: "I am not such a child but I can guess something; whenever my Lord comes to my Lady she orders the porter to let in nobody else, and then they call for a pen and ink, and say they are going to write history." (1) But intimate and affectionate as the friendship was (Mrs Vesey says she was never alone with Lord Lyttelton when he did not talk of Mrs. Montagu with affection) it seems to have been harmless. After Lord Lyttelton's death James Beattie tells us he found her "in a very indifferent state of health." Burke wrote her a human letter and even allowing for the complimentary manners of the day in formal letter-writing, it, too, indicates that Mrs. Montagu had genuine gifts of friendship: "While Lord Lyttelton lived I am sure that neither religion nor reason, nor natural good temper could have supported him without the sympathy of a mind formed like his own. And surely your agreeableness of conversing, your wisdom, your cheerfulness, and your counsels were never better exerted than in rendering

(1) Letters, IV, 319.

the last years of a learned and good man tolerable, when nothing could make them happy. It was an employment natural to you and worthy of that humanity, that in some way or other contributes, according to the quality of their wants, to the consolation, support, and satisfaction of all that come near you. You will continue to do good to those that remain, and to enjoy that you have done to those who have no further occasion for it ..." (1)

The friendships with Lord Bath and Lord Lyttelton were in the natural order of things because Elizabeth Montagu was moving in society just below the Court circle. But it was a far cry in several senses from Hill Street, London, and Sandleford Priory, Berkshire, from Allerthorpe Hall, Yorkshire and Denton Hall, Northumberland, to a little farm-house near Laurencekirk in Kincardineshire, a farm-house that is now a cow-shed behind the new farm-house, where James Beattie, later to become the Professor of Moral Philosophy in Marischal College Aberdeen, was born. Of the first meeting of Elizabeth Montagu and James Beattie (11) we have unfortunately no record but it must have been an interesting encounter. Through Dr. John Gregory, Professor of Philosophy at Edinburgh University, who had married a cousin of the Robinsons, Mrs. Montagu had already served Beattie by spreading the knowledge of The Minstrel. (She sent copies of it to Lord Chatham and to Dr. Percy) and

(1) Blunt, I, 276.

(11) No biographer has yet done justice to Mrs. Montagu's Scottish friendships. Some writers have ignored them.

in 1771, he visited her at Sandleford, with Mrs. Beattie. From that time until her death in 1800, they had an unbroken friendship and a very sincere correspondence, in which they discussed their most private concerns. Beattie's domestic life was a troubled one, for his wife showed signs of mental illness a few years after their marriage. Later he lost his two sons to whom he was deeply attached. The second, Montagu, as has been already indicated was Elizabeth's godson and namesake. For a long time Beattie had many financial worries, his income at Aberdeen depending on the number of students in his classes and never being adequate. Mrs. Montagu did her utmost to procure him a Government pension, and she succeeded. (1) When Beattie was in London she introduced him to many of the most distinguished people of the day: to David Garrick and Lord Lyttelton, to the Duchess of Portland and Mrs. Delany and to many of her Bluestocking friends. Her relationship to him more than to any other demonstrates at once her public and private virtues. To him she was the female Maecenas (the name was often given to her) and an intimate personal friend. Perhaps it was something of the straightness, of the simple Scottish honesty of Beattie that brought forth the best in Mrs. Montagu, for in spite of all the glitter of her public life

(1) "The income arising from his professorship varied much, according to the number of students in his class from whom he accepted fees: there were always many whom he admitted free. One year the income was £157.10.3: another £120.16.8. The sum he received from his pension was £183.10.0."
M. Forbes, "Beattie", 97. Footnote.

there was a vein of genuine goodness in her character. In her letters to him, there is a quality that is almost endearing. Experience teaches wise men and women more successfully than it teaches fools. Life by its own natural processes had taken away much of the dross, of the flashiness, of the affectation of her early manners. That is evident in her letters to Lord Kaimes too, but she never came so near to Kaimes as she did to Beattie. (i) "My valuable and Dear Friend" she addressed him in her last touching and friendly note. It was a simple enquiry after his health. She could write little because her eyes were so weak. His own last tribute to her appears in a letter to Dr. Laing of 1799, in which year he heard a false report of her death: "...to me on all occasions she has been a faithful and affectionate friend, especially in seasons of distress and difficulty...for not less than twenty years she was my punctual correspondent...I need not tell you what an excellent writer she was: you must have seen her book on Shakespeare as compared with the Greek and French dramatic writers. I have known several ladies eminent in literature but she excelled them all; and in conversation she had more wit than any other person, male or female, whom I have known. These, however, were her slighter accomplishments: what was infinitely

(i) In one letter Kaimes chides her for being so detached: "...you behave to me like a buskined queen acting a capital part in a capital play, without once admitting me behind the scenes into any degree of ease or familiarity". A. F. Tytler, Life and Writings of Kaimes, (1807), II, 52.

more to her honour, she was a sincere Christian, both in faith and practice, and took every opportunity to show it, so that by her example and influence she did much good." (i)

The patroness of Beattie and of other men of letters was the patroness also of ordinary men and women. At Sandleford she delighted to feast the farm-workers and the Sunday-School children on mutton puddings and "pyes" and meat "plumb" puddings. (ii) In 1767 there was a very severe winter. Elizabeth was recovering from the dullness of Denton, in London, but her husband was at Sandleford. She sent him instructions for the making and distributing of broth to the poor. Soon after Mr. Montagu died, she made a grand tour of her northern estates. She feasted her Yorkshire tenants with "a most elegant entertainment: a brood of fine chickens at the top, a great sirloin of beef at the bottom, a loin of veal on one side, and a leg of mutton on the other, a ham and pigeon pye in the middle, with ducks and geese, tarts, cheesecakes, pudding, pease etc., to fill up chinks". (iii) At Portman Square, Mrs. Montagu became

(i) M. Forbes, Beattie, 304.

(ii) Mrs. Montagu assisted Robert Raikes, the founder of Sunday Schools, to establish a Sunday School at Newbury near Sandleford in 1786. Attendance was encouraged by an annual feast in July, from which truants were excluded. "Thanks to Mrs. Montagu's pies and plum pudding, the Newbury Sunday Schools were a gratifying success, and the heart of good Mr. Raikes rejoiced." Blunt, II, 202, 212.

(iii) Ibid., I, 302-3.

quite famous for her annual May Day feast to the little chimney-sweeps, "the climbing boys," and her charity was celebrated by Bowles:

"When Summer comes, the bells shall ring, and flowers and
hawthorn blow,
The village lassies and the lads shall all a-Maying go;
Kind-hearted lady, may thy soul in heaven a blessing
reap,
Whose bounty at that season flows, to cheer the little
sweep." (i)

Tables were set out in the garden and from one o'clock till four, relays of beef, mutton and pudding were served to relays of little black faces. (ii) This May Day feast in the year 1800 was probably the Grand Finale to the great succession of varied assemblies that played so frequent a part in the life of Elizabeth Montagu, for she died two months later. The little sweeps^{thus} mourned her:

"Tho' I'm only a sweep
Yet allow me to weep
And with sorrow my loss to deplore
While the shovel and brush
Are now totally hushed
Since the Patron of Sweeps is no more." (iii)

(i) William Lisle Bowles. Poems, ed. Gilfillan, II, 263. Written for James Montgomery's Chimney Sweeper's Album.

(ii) Jem White's contemporary and annual feasts to the sweeps at Smithfield on St. Bartholomew's Day, immortalised by Lamb, in The Praise of Chimney Sweepers come to mind. But the fare there was "hissing sausages" and "small ale" and one imagines that the guests were more at ease at St. Bartholomew's Fair and with such inimitable hosts, than at fashionable Portman Square.

(iii) Blunt, II, 346.

Her death has a symbolic significance coming, as it does, so soon after the close of the great eighteenth century, to which she so thoroughly belonged. Patronage of men of letters as of the lower classes had received its death-blow. Six years earlier William Blake's Songs of Experience including The Chimney-Sweeper, were published. His voice was but one of the many trumpet-voices that heralded a new era. The world of Mrs. Montagu, for all its glory and splendour, had 'had its day and ceased to be.'

MARY DELANY.

(1700-1788)

"With a person finely proportioned she had a most lovely face of great sweetness, ... with a complexion which nothing could outdo or equal, in which, to speak the language of poets, 'the lilies and roses contended for the mastery.' ... The sweetness arising from united graces was guarded by a dignity which kept all admirers in awe, insomuch that she was the woman in the world to whom that fine description of Solomon could best be applied: 'fair as the moon! clear as the sun! but terrible as an army with banners!'" Dr. Delany.

Autobiography and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany, III, 389.

It seems odd on first thoughts to find Mrs. Delany, the most aristocratic of the Bluestockings and Mrs. Thrale the least genteel, suggesting a comparison in one's mind. And yet, there are unmistakable similarities in their circumstances and experiences. Both were "bosom repositories"(i) for Fanny Burney. Both had to suffer an unpleasant mariage de convenance in youth and both when over forty, married a second time for love and beneath them. Both had to nurse a husband through the agonies of "red raging gout"(ii). Both were associated with the Bluestocking movement and both seem to stand apart from it. And the reasons for their seeming to stand apart while at first apparently utterly dissimilar, are less so, on revision. Mrs. Thrale was too feminine, too womanly by nature to be a thorough Bluestocking. Mrs. Delany was too womanly not so much by nature, as by breeding and the tradition she inherited. She stands out from her century as Mrs. Thrale does, although with a difference. What Burke said of her as reported by Dr. Johnson is worth putting beside Professor Saintsbury's comment on Mrs. Thrale: that she was "possibly the most feminine person who ever lived - with the prerogative exception of Eve.-" Burke said, "She [Mrs. Delany] was a truly great woman of fashion, that she was not only the woman of fashion of the present age, but she was the highest-bred woman in

(i) Burney, Diary, III, 485.

(ii) J. L. Clifford, Hester Lynch Piozzi, (Mrs. Thrale), (1941), 423.

the world, and the woman of fashion of all ages: that she was high-bred, great in every instance, and would continue fashionable in all ages." (i) They were both too truly womanly to be completely identified with a movement to assert the claims of women, for in so doing they would have lost their femininity. They both stand outside their century. Mrs. Thrale would have been not a little pleased to be compared with Mrs. Delany. Mrs. Delany, one fears, would have thought Mrs. Thrale vulgar. They never met, and there are indications that Mrs. Delany did not wish to meet Mrs. Thrale.

Mary Granville, afterwards Pendarves, afterwards Delany, was bred to Kings' Courts and Queens' Palaces. She was of the blood of the brave Sir Richard Grenville of the Revenge, and her aunt had been a maid of honour to William III's Queen Mary. It was hoped that she herself would be a maid-of-honour to Queen Anne: but with the death of Anne and the political changes involved, her family shared the bitter fate of many Tory families. Mary's father, Bernard Granville, however, was fortunate to be released after his imprisonment in the Tower, and to have no worse future in store for him than retirement to Gloucestershire. Mary had to bear the brunt of the family misfortunes, for she came under the tutelage of her paternal uncle Lord Lansdowne, the patron and friend of Pope, who for a mixture of financial and political reasons heartlessly arranged for his lovely niece to be married to the unprepossessing Alexander Pendarves of Roscrow, near Falmouth, Cornwall. (ii)

(1) Delany, Autobiography, V, 12.

Cornwall.(i) Mary had more than a common share of beauty, with curly fair hair, "dove's eyes", a blooming complexion and "naturally scarlet" lips.(ii) There are two Opie portraits of her, the earlier suggesting aristocratic handsomeness, the later, serene benignity; but few verbal references to the details of her beauty exist, although the fact of it is well established. Austin Dobson tells us colourfully that Pendarves was "as fat as Parson Trulliber; as red-faced as Addison's Tory Fox-hunter; as gouty as Lord Chalkstone."(iii) The picture is very literally too rosy. The epithets used in The Dictionary of National Biography, "fat, snuffy and sulky," come nearer the mark, because Mrs. Delany herself tells us Mr. Pendarves's snuff-taking habit gave him a "dirty look" and that he was "altogether a person rather disgusting than engaging."(iv)

- (i) The marriage took place in 1718 when Mary was in her eighteenth year, her spouse, sixty.
"What muse for Granville can refuse to sing?" wrote Pope in Windsor Forest. "Mine for one, I am sure," comments Fanny Burney, thinking of this unsuitable marriage.
Burney, Diary, IV, 325.
- (ii) These details we have from Dr. Delany. See Autobiography, III, 389.
- (iii) "Dear Mrs. Delany," Side-Walk Studies, (1902), 113.
- (iv) Autobiography, I, 34.

With such a mate, Mary Granville at sweet seventeen, journeyed down to Roscrow Castle, a gloomy prison in which the windows were above her head. Little wonder that she called it "Averno" in her Autobiography. Mercifully, Pendarves, who later became very drunken and would fall into bed in that state in the small hours, died in 1724. Unfortunately, he had omitted to sign his will and so from a financial point of view, Mary's sufferings had been useless. But the best of her life was certainly yet to be. For nearly twenty years, broken by a long Irish holiday, she lived in fashionable London society, where she captured many a heart; but it was not till 1743 that she re-married. This time her suitor was Dr. Delany, later Dean of Down, the friend of Swift, with whom she had a very happy married life, chiefly in Ireland. During this period she came into frequent contact with Mr. and Mrs. Vesey of Lucan near Dublin. Mrs. Vesey was later to become an outstanding Bluestocking hostess and with her ease of manner, Mrs. Delany was perfectly charmed. In her correspondence of the time there are very pleasant glimpses of the Vesey household.(1) On Dr. Delany's death in 1768, Mrs. Delany again took her place in fashionable London society, most of her time being spent in her own house in St. James's Place, or at Bulstrode, near Windsor, the home of her life-long friend the Duchess of Portland,

(1) The most charming is of a breakfast in the Dairy at Lucan, when the table was "strewed with roses." Delany, Autobiography, II, 563.

already mentioned as the friend of Mrs. Montagu. Finally on the Duchess's death in 1785, she had the honour of being offered a house at Windsor (i) by the King and Queen, and the present of £300 a year. When Mrs. Delany "moved in" she was told only to bring clothes and attendants, for all kinds of stores(ii) would be provided for her. She was in fact, treated as an intimate friend both by King George and Queen Charlotte. It was the King who called her "Dear Mrs. Delany", and not only did the Royal couple repeatedly give her gifts,(iii) but both

(i) There is a delightful picture of the house in Fanny Burney's Diary, II, 290. It still exists and once belonged to A. C. Benson.

(ii) Fanny Burney specifies "wine, sweetmeats, pickles, etc. etc." Diary, II, 296. The incident gave Horace Walpole a delightful opportunity to let his scandalising fancy play. He wrote thus to the Countess of Upper Ossory: "Have you heard the history of our Madame de Maintenon?...I know many particulars from her own mouth. In short, la Veuve Delany, not Scarron, sent her woman to Windsor to get by heart the ichnography of the hotel granted to her. When she had made herself mistress of details, she went to dine at the White Hart. She was recalled by a page to Miss Goldsworthy who told her it was his Majesty's command that she should bring down nothing but her lady's clothes and the boxes of her maids, for Louis le Grand [George III] is very considerate: she must bring no plate, china, linen, wine etc... when the new favourite arrived, Louis himself was at the door to hand her out of the chaise: there ends my journal. Others say that after a short visit, elle le renvoyait triste mais point désespéré...."

Walpole, Letters, XIII,
319-20.

(iii) Among these were a gold knotting-shuttle, (reproduced in R.B. Johnson's Mrs. Delany, 1925), and a cameo of the King set in gold and diamonds, worn by Mrs. Delany in the later Opie portrait.

visited her frequently and informally. On one such occasion, the Queen came unannounced to dinner. Mrs. Delany and her grand-niece, Miss Port, (i) who was domiciled with her, were dining on veal cutlets and an orange pudding. Queen Charlotte was particularly delighted with the pudding for which she asked the recipe; but the Royal cooks were not so successful with it, and so the pudding had to be sent up to the Queen's table from Mrs. Delany's kitchen. (ii) Thus the evening of Mrs. Delany's life was spent in those Royal courts for which in childhood she had been destined.

So much for her life. It remains to consider her Blue-stocking claims and connections. Although Mrs. Delany was twenty years senior to Mrs. Montagu, she and Mrs. Montagu were friends from Mrs. Montagu's teens, their mutual friend being the Duchess of Portland. But in later years, Mrs. Delany became critical of Mrs. Montagu's social pretensions and wearied by the brilliance and bustle of her assemblies. So in 1776 she was thankful to escape from a dazzling company at Hill Street, when the door was opened to let in more company. It took an hour of the Duchess of Portland's "all-healing conversation, and a dish of good tea" to refresh her and make amends for her toils. (iii) She was puzzled by the vanity and the social ambition of a woman

(i) Georgiana Mary Ann Port later married Benjamin Waddington of Llanover and became the mother of Lady Llanover, editor of Mrs. Delany's Autobiography and Correspondence.

(ii) Delany, Autobiography, V, 472.

(iii) Ibid., V, 97.

of Mrs. Montagu's intelligence and wit. With Mrs. Chapone, Mrs. Delany had more in common. She approved heartily of her Letters On The Improvement Of The Mind. Like her too, she was a warm admirer (and correspondent, although not so "corresponding") of Richardson. Clarissa was an especial favourite: "I am astonished at the author,:" she wrote, "his invention, his fine sentiments, strong sense, lively wit and above all his exalted piety and excellent design in the whole." (i) Mrs. Carter and Hannah More too, she admired; but Mrs. Delany's closest friend among the major Bluestockings was Fanny Burney, although she only knew her in the last five years of her life. Fanny found in the experienced Mrs. Delany a guide to the intricate diplomacies of Court life, and admired profoundly her piety and what she called her "purity of prudence." That she sometimes appears to be patronising in the Diary is explained by the fact that she must be the heroine of her own Diary. (ii) Even in ^{the description of} her relationships with the Queen, Fanny is forgivably the central figure. ¶ Mrs. Delany was more aristocratic than the other Bluestockings. Her most intimate friends, the Duchess of Portland, Lady Bute and Mrs. Boscawen, were drawn from Court circles. She was an occasional, not a regular attender, at

(i) Ibid., II, 598.

(ii) Lady Llanover is very scathing in her attacks on Fanny Burney in varied notes throughout the Autobiography and Correspondence, but her criticisms are unjustifiable.

Bluestocking gatherings. Yet in many things, her sympathies were with the group. To begin with, throughout her life she demonstrated the dignity of her sex and the need for women to occupy their time not with trifles but with serious and useful activities.(1) True, for the greater part of her life she lived and moved in the world of fashion, but she deplored extravagance of dress as ill-bred and vulgar. Her letters constantly refer to the absurd high head-dresses fashionable in the second half of the century. "The ladies' head-dresses

- (1) Any description of Mrs. Delany would be incomplete without a reference to her wonderful handwork. She attempted all kinds of artistic activity: embroidery, shell work, sketching, painting, and in her later days she became famous for her paper mosaics, now in the British Museum. These cut-paper flowers not only won praise from art critics like Horace Walpole, who mentioned them in his Anecdotes of Painting, as executed with "a precision and truth unparalleled" (Letters XIII, 420), but from botanists such as Sir Joseph Banks and Erasmus Darwin, for their scientific accuracy. The work was begun when Mrs. Delany was 72 and finished in her 86th year. "To turn over these thousand brilliant flower pictures" Mr. R.B. Johnson says, "is to gaze spell-bound upon bold splashes of vivid colour, gossamer delicacy in vignette, strange line-harmonies we had supposed Japanese: and every subtlety of an unerring instinct for perfect grouping and composition: everywhere life, truth and art. Since the petals, stamina, style and leaves, the lights, shades and tints were all cut out and laid on in place; since the veinings of leaves and the ridges of stalks are superimposed; they have a solidity or rotund depth which gives them a radiant vitality." Mrs. Delany, R.B. Johnson Intro. xxvi. See also an article by Mrs. Edmund Gosse,

Temple Bar, Dec., 1897.

grow daily, and seem like the Tower of Babel to mean to reach the skies"(i) In another place, she describes a concert at Mrs. Walsingham's where there were "rows above rows of fine ladies with towering tops." On this occasion the Duchess of Portland, Lady Bute and she, were "the only flat caps in the room."(ii) Her morals were very strict from her earliest days. She certainly put into practice the maxim of an aunt which she used to quote: "Avoid putting yourself in danger, fly from temptation, for it is always odds on the tempter's side." And her temptations must have been very strong, particularly in the days of her early married life, when her young charms were so irresistible. Her attitude to Chesterfield's Letters is exactly that of Mrs. Montagu: "...as a politician and what is called a man of the world, I suppose they are faultless, and his polishing precepts are useful and excellent, but I am afraid as you go on, his duplicity and immorality will give you as much offence as his indiscriminate accusation does the ladies... The general opinion of these letters among the better sort of men is, that they are ingenious, useful as to polish of manners, but very hurtful in a moral sense. He mentions a decent regard to religion, at the same time recommends falsehood even to your most intimate acquaintance - and adultery as an accomplishment.

(i) Autobiography, V, 197-8.

(ii) Ibid, 525.

Les grâces are the sum total of his religion."(i) Nowhere is she more one with the Bluestockings than in her sense of propriety. To her grand-niece, aged six, she wrote an Essay on Propriety, when she herself was in her 78th year: "To define her [Propriety] exactly, is difficult and the pleasure and honour of her company must be diligently sought for; and never for one moment neglected, for if once lost, she is very rarely regained." And again "Bear in mind that moderation is always genteel. 'Genteel!' What a pretty word!...in plain English it is an ease and a grace entirely free from affectation."(ii) In company with the Bluestockings too, she was something of a scribbler. (Her Autobiography and Correspondence is in six volumes). And like them she earned the respect and friendship of men of culture and men of letters. In her early days, she won the approbation of Swift, who corresponded with her. But no one appreciated her breeding, her excellent taste and artistic sense, better than Horace Walpole who treated her with courtly respect and gallantry. Seen as a whole, Mrs. Delany's life is a most harmonious thing. Her bearing was exemplary on all occasions and to her dying moments she suffered no 'diminution of dignity'. She knew the end had come, but she was resolved to spare Miss Port and Fanny Burney, who were attending her, the sad strain of farewells. And so turning from them she said meaningfully, "And now, I'll go to sleep."(iii)

(i) Ibid., V, 27-8.

(ii) Ibid., V, 311.

(iii) Burney, Diary, III, 484.

ELIZABETH CARTER.

(1717-1806)

"The market-folks in the side-walk left their pigs and their fowls to squall their hearts out, while they told each other, 'Sartainly, she is the greatest scollard in the world'." M. Pennington, Memoirs of Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, I, 224.

"Mrs. Carter, upon whom the sound scholarship of a learned man sat, as it does upon a man, easily and quietly, and who was no more vain of understanding Greek than an ordinary woman of knowing how to spell." Lady Louisa Stuart, Gleanings from an Old Portfolio, III, 65 .

Eliza Carter wore blue stockings from her childhood.

Having neither means nor opportunities to be a hostess at Blue Stocking Assemblies, she is yet in many respects the bluest of all the Bluestocking ladies. It is not without significance that she answers more closely to the now current conception of a bluestocking than does Mrs. Montagu, or Hester Lynch Thrale, or Fanny Burney or even Mrs. Chapone. A clergyman's daughter, she spent the greater portion of her life in Deal, where her father was Perpetual Curate. From childhood, she had an avid passion for learning, but the acquisition of knowledge was a very stiff climb for Eliza's young feet. In fact she grew so out of breath in the effort that her Father did his utmost to discourage her. His pleas were in vain. On she plodded, impairing her already myopic eyes in mastering the mysteries of Greek and Hebrew (later to be of such triumphant and rewarding use in the translation of Epictetus into the English language and in her study of the Bible); construing the Latin in which scholars were appropriately to write epigrams to her; acquainting herself in no superficial manner with French, Spanish, Italian and German (in later life she tackled Portuguese and Arabic); revelling in the discoveries of all sorts of knowledge: giving a warm part of her heart to the study of astronomy. We are finding her letters just a little heavy-going. The meat is too strong for babes, the morality too exacting, the piety too devout, when suddenly Orion lights up the page with frosty

brilliance, Sirius is at his heels, the "choral" Pleiades, as she calls them, are high in the Heavens, and in that excellent company, the step is jauntier again. But her greatest zeal was for Religion - Divine Philosophy, and how it charmed her guileless heart!

But all this strenuous application was at some cost, for even to gentle Eliza, the tree of knowledge had its bitter fruits. She discovered that a pinch of snuff would keep her awake in those awful moments in the low hours when flesh and spirit struggled against each other and bed seemed so eminently desirable. Soon the pinches had to become more frequent if they were to be effective, and although her Father made every effort to make her discontinue the habit (and how incongruous a habit it seems when we look at her gracious portraits!) he had reluctantly to agree to its continuance, because he realised how much she suffered without it.(1) And not only did she use the familiar wet towel round her head to combat sleep, she even put a cold wet cloth to the pit of her stomach, chewing green tea the while. Alas! the whirligig of time brought in its revenges with no uncertain spin. There is a phrase in a minor key running right through Eliza's letters. It is a phrase with many variations, but the central notes are ever the same. They

(1) Queen Charlotte was fond of snuff and left a legacy of it to certain poorhouses.

are, "but my head said, no".(i) She became in short, a chronic victim to the most appalling headaches. But if Eliza Carter sowed with tears, she reaped with joy. In her seventeenth year, she sent her early attempts at poetry (signed Eliza) to The Gentleman's Magazine - Cave, the editor was a friend of her father's - and in a year or two the same magazine published appreciative epigrams to her, even in Greek and Latin. (ii)

But the unenduring stuff of Eliza's youth needs some attention, for she was no mere bookworm. There is evidence from her devoted, nay fond, nephew and first biographer Montagu (iii) Pennington, that she was healthy, full of life and spirits, as a child "somewhat of a romp," he says, (iv) and that in her later teens and early twenties she was even excessively fond of dancing. On one occasion she walked three miles in a wild wind, "that I thought would have blown me out of this planet," (v) danced nine hours, then walked back home again. One likes to picture her not only gracing a minuet,

(i) Sometimes it is, "my teasing head" or "but my head dispatched me to a pillow." On one occasion at Spa when the Bishop of Augsburg desired her "not to have the head-ache today" she wrote, "the head-ache alas! is no flatterer of Sovereign Princes."

(ii) Dr. Johnson contributed both a Greek and a Latin epigram to "Eliza" in April, 1738. See The Gentleman's Magazine, 1738, 210

(iii) Second son of her only real sister, Margaret. Mrs. Montagu was his godmother, giving her name to "the little fat nephew."

(iv) Memoirs, 119.

(v) Ibid., 26.

the dance of the century that seems to suit her admirably, but entering into the spirited English Country Dances popular at the time. Eliza Carter was not distinguished for her good looks, but she was handsome, fair and clear-complexioned, and pearly white teeth contributed much to a very gracious smile. Indeed graciousness rather than beauty is the quality her portraits suggest, but both in youth and age her character must have lent much to her appearance. Her eyes, although short-sighted, were bright with her zest for life. She was a stranger to anything petulant or sulky and something of classical dignity must have expressed a life of very disciplined activity, in her features. Her short-sightedness tended to make her peer and therefore to stoop (Mrs. Montagu also stooped and was short-sighted), and later "she was rather inclined to corpulency" (i) says her solemn biographer. Nevertheless one feels that for her youth Meredith's words would have been an apt tribute: "She does not rank among beautiful women, she has her moments for outshining them" and that Fanny Burney has said the last word about her more advanced years: "I never saw age so graceful in the female sex yet; her whole face seems to beam with goodness, piety and philanthropy". (ii)

Deal was the background of Eliza Carter's life. There

(i) Memoirs, I, 457.

(ii) Diary I, 391.

she was born. There she was her father's best companion before and after his second marriage. (Her own mother died when she was ten). She used to love to spend the winter months in London where she might meet her friends. Circumstances sometimes prevented this in her earlier days, but after the publication of the translation of Epictetus in 1758, the lessening of home responsibilities, and financial security made the annual visit a joyous possibility. Various other holidays she enjoyed, at Bath, at Tunbridge Wells and at the Country houses of her friends. To crown all holidays, in company with Mr. and Mrs. Montagu and "my Lord Bath", she made a Continental Tour to Spa. That was the most memorable occasion of her life and more will be said of it in another connection.

Meantime we are concerned with the day-to-day life at Deal, and a very busy, pleasant life it was. Eliza was an early riser of the most Spartan kind. To a bell placed at the head of her bed a packthread was attached. This passed out of the window and was weighted down with a piece of lead to the garden below. The Sexton, who rose between four and five in the morning, was ordered to pull the packthread, which he did, says Eliza "with as much heart and goodwill as if he was ring-my knell." (1) What then? Not immediately to the study of Greek but to a vigorous ramble on the Downs to watch the sun

(1) Memoirs, I, 133.

"pillow his chin upon an orient wave" irradiating the Eastern horizon, while stars still twinkled in the Western sky and the Kentish Downs were still blue and chill; or to a walk breast-high through corn-fields wet with dew, in the exhilarating freshness of the early morning. Then a brief spell or reading: a chapter of the Bible, or a sermon by Clarke, and then some Hebrew, Greek or Latin to keep her knowledge of these tongues green. To breakfast she looked forward very much, as to tea-time, for in spite of her natural diffidence, Eliza was a good conversationalist in an intimate and congenial circle, and breakfast might linger on indefinitely in these spacious days. She loved to hear people talking, and talk (and tea) begot talk. She and her Father would at last be left alone to drain the elegant tea-pot, and how she loved to listen to his scholarly conversation and how proud was Dr. Carter of her intelligent response.

The range and depth of her studies was quite astonishing. More interesting even was her method of application because modern 'fatigue' psychologists have sometimes recommended it. She worked in short half-hour periods and would vary her close reading with writing, with a half-hour at the spinnet or with her German lute. Domestic interests claimed at least some part of the time. She was always nimble with her needle, making shirts for her brothers as well as sewing for herself; and from Dr. Johnson we learn that she knew how to cook: "My old friend Mrs. Carter could make a pudding as well as

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translate Epictetus from the Greek and work a handkerchief as well as compose a poem." (i) On one occasion she made a brandy pudding that was not a success and the matter became a family joke, and so she made a good cake to try to wipe out the memory of the disaster. (The brandy pudding has a grim significance for us. Milk was scarce, so Eliza used brandy. What a world. And the pudding wasn't good.) She loved flowers and would busy herself arranging twenty vases of pinks and roses in her room. In the evenings she often visited between eight and ten o'clock, at which hour she generally went to bed. While Eliza never entertained in London, she lived very hospitably at Deal where she saw "a great deal of tea and some dinner company". (ii) Shortly before her death she was visited by His Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland and by Her Royal Highness, the Princess of Wales. In her earlier days she was sickened with the emptiness and follies of the card-playing world and in one outburst to her close friend and correspondent, Catherine Talbot, declared she would ever after fly from a pack of cards" as from the face of a serpent." (iii) But when she was more mature she was very fond of cards, playing quadrille and whist frequently, making a characteristic protest against

(i) Johnsonian Miscellanies, ed. G.Birkbeck Hill, (1897), II, 11.

(ii) Memoirs, I, 396.

(iii) Letters between Mrs. Carter and Miss Talbot, ed. M. Pennington, (1819), I, 86.

the reckless gambling of the day by refusing to gamble beyond threepenny points. In an age when the use of cosmetics was carried to great excess she shunned every paint and pomade, all rouge and enamel.(i) She sometimes rubbed a little Hungary or lavender water on her head. Otherwise, her only cosmetic was cold water. (ii) Like that of the Doctor of Physick, her diet was very temperate. She ate little meat, but was fond of pastry and vegetables. Lemonade, or milk and water she drank with her dinner, or one glass of wine if she dined in company. Later "for her stomach's sake" she had her nightly glass of port. If she came near excess in any appetite, that was in her love of tea-drinking. The popularity of tea to-day may owe not a little to Eliza and her cronies.

So much for Eliza's daily life and habits: but what kind of person was she? It is impossible to understand her character unless we can enter a little into the spirit of the orthodox Church of England in the eighteenth century, for she

(i) "One bridegroom complained that his bride preserved her beauty at night by sleeping with her hair in a greasy net, and a bundle of flannel as large as a turban round her head, while her arms were encased in perfumed gloves; another "outraged husband married a beauty who enveloped her whole head and face except her nose to take care of her eyes and prevent wrinkles." A.S.Turberville, Johnson's England, (1933), I, 402.

(ii) Memoirs, I, 395.

is of the very cream of its piety. To the Evangelical, even the devout preacher of an Established Church must seem to lack fire. The Rev. Nicolas Carter of Deal was a very orthodox Churchman, and yet Whitefield told the people of Deal that they had need of his assistance "as their minister did not preach to them the Gospel of Christ". (1) There is here, of course, an instance of the perennial quarrel between the professional priest and the professional evangelist. Both are needed in the economy of the Church, the one to preserve the doctrine, the other to save it from mere formalism. Nicolas Carter, was not a latitudinarian, but he was a classical scholar and a true child of his century. To him enthusiasm was a dangerous emotion, the more dangerous because it might take one beyond the bounds where reason could hold sway. He was constantly warning Eliza against it. Rationalism had penetrated into the high places of orthodoxy. Eliza Carter's every action was judged by the standard of her religious principles. Whatever she did she did it as to God. If a book seemed to her blasphemous she would lay it down, and in publishing books herself, her sole purpose and delight was that, through them, Christian truth should be spread abroad. But the reasonableness of the age kept her from narrowness or intolerance. Her views, for example, on pagan philosophies would largely coincide with the views of liberal theologians. Only where

(1) Ibid., I, 56. Footnote.

these directly opposed Christian teaching, did she feel that they could do any harm. All true knowledge is of God, she would have argued. She worried greatly over a phrase in Epictetus (1), the meaning of which seemed to indicate that in the last resort Epictetus would permit suicide. One feels that her own character was built up on her sound knowledge of reformed Christian doctrine and of classical philosophy. She herself admits the constant danger of becoming stoical rather than Christian in outlook, a danger of which Protestants have often been acutely aware. I should put integrity in its richest sense as her highest characteristic. And that indicates the harmony her life achieved. One wonders if Dr. Johnson had her in mind when he was discussing happiness as a matter of character and not as a question of whether one were married or not. An extraordinary strength of will and tenacity of purpose have already been suggested in her character by her disciplined studies. Eliza Carter hated shams and was therefore saved from prudery. She had a very attractive independence of spirit. True, she derived much from her reading and from her contact with such people as Dr. Johnson, but her opinions were never merely secondhand. This is strikingly evident not only in her attitude to the position of women in

(1) ἀνεύκτα ἡ θύρα. (Pennington gives θύρα ηνοικτα) The gate is open i.e. the gate of death. See Memoirs, I, 200. The ideas of Epictetus have interested both rational and Christian thinkers in our own day.

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society, but also, significantly in her attitude to the American colonies. Moreover, she had a rock-like quality of friendship. It was to her that Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Vesey naturally turned in distress, and her detailed remembrance of people in her will indicates her genuine gratitude for friendship. In addition to relatives and servants, there are at least fifty friends mentioned there. Her most delightful characteristics are probably nowhere more patent than on her Continental Tour to Spa with Mr. and Mrs. Montagu and "my Lord Bath" in 1763, the year of the Peace of Paris. It was the holiday of a lifetime and neither 'grievous' nor deplorable' sea-sickness, nor the inveterate headache, prevented Eliza from enjoying the full flavour of the experience. It was a great joy, of course, to be able to use the French and German which she had studied so hard, but the greatest pleasure was just talking to all kinds of people and hearing them tell their own story. We have all suffered from the talker who never listens. Eliza Carter was a good talker because she was a good listener. She was interesting because she was interested. As soon as she arrived at the Calais inn, she won the heart of "a little perruquier" with a most magnificent queue (1) who was attached to the staff. And throughout her travels, she never missed an opportunity of chatting to people of all kinds. Her coming must have been much appreciated by the nuns

(1) Memoirs, I, 252.

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in the various convents she and Mrs. Montagu visited, and on these and other experiences we have the fruits of a keen observation and a pleasant humour. Mrs. Carter was not witty. Her mind worked slowly, but she had a genuine spirit of fun that could appreciate among other things the absurdity of being allowed to peep at the kitchen furniture of the Virgin, which included a kitchen stove and a brass kettle; and the grimmer humour of being devoured by bugs. To these pestilential creatures poor Eliza seems to have been a ready prey. At Cologne in her agony, she embalmed herself in cucumber juice.

Her first interest then was in people. She was immensely attracted to the order of chanoinesses; one guesses that she appreciated the courtesies, the very gracious courtesies of women of rank and fashion trained in a religious order. She tells us the chanoinesses were "not bound by vows, nor forbid to marry, nor has their dress any other distinction than a very becoming ornament of a blue ribbon and a garnet cross". (i) It is not surprising that the gentle and cultured Eliza should have felt a real bond with the order. Teasingly she writes: "as I find they may marry when they can and flirt when they will, I see nothing in the establishment that might not suit me extremely well". (ii) Fashions too intrigued her.

(i) Memoirs, I, 317.

(ii) Ibid., I, 339.

At Spa the company was frequently invited to dine with the Bishop of Augsburg. She expected an 'episcopal' figure, but she was disappointed for he appeared in "a blossom-coloured coat, with an embroidered star on his breast and a diamond cross." The arrival of the Prince and Princess Ferdinand of Prussia was the great event of that season at Spa. Eliza had no hoop and so thought she would not be able to pay her court at their first appearance at the Assembly. Later, however, a dispensation was given to go without hoops. But there was no dispensation from having a severe headache. Later, she tells us that the members of the Princess's suite "are laced within an inch of their lives, their stays excessively stiff, and their stomachers of an amazing length, nearly approaching to their chins". (i) She, whose only cosmetic was cold water, was very much irritated by the English women abroad who were plastered with rouge, who had "glaring Parisian complexions." (ii) Of food, however, she says disappointingly little (Virginia Woolf complains how seldom novelists do the subject justice). But one comment is illuminating. The party had dined with Prince Lewis of Brunswick. "The entertainment was very noble,"

(i) Memoirs, I, 288.

(ii) (Mrs. Montagu must have exercised considerable restraint in Mrs. Carter's company. When she visited Paris in 1776 her face was hectic with make-up.

says Eliza, "about forty-five dishes in each course and a dessert". (i)

The characteristic eighteenth-century tolerance - one of the best legacies of the reign of William III is very apparent in her contact with Roman Catholicism. Like many a Protestant traveller to Europe, she was struck by the simple piety of peasant folk, by the way they slipped into Church from their work, just as they were. She was, of course, shocked at improprieties. She disliked intensely for example, the use of a crucifix as a fountain, the wounds pouring forth water, and she was astounded at the ignorance of the worshippers, as they murmured prayers without understanding them, and at their credulity as they told "manifestly mendacious" stories of saints. But she appreciated the great beauty of such buildings as Cologne and Antwerp Cathedrals, and could laugh with amused forbearance at the tawdriness and superstition constantly found in Churches and religious processions. She felt that the frippery decorations on altars would often have better suited a lady's dressing table, and at Antwerp where she attended a service in honour of the Virgin, she felt "the light graces of Italian music but ill-adapted to the solemnities of religious worship. They are, however," she goes on to say, "very well adapted to the fopperies of Popish idolatry, and were perfectly conformable to the dress of the Virgin, who was extremely in gala, and dressed out like a fine lady for a ball." (ii)

(i) Memoirs, I, 366.

(ii) Ibid., I, 373.

A word, however, must be said on Mrs. Carter's prejudices, for prejudices she had. One wonders indeed if any human character can ever be anything but insipid where there are none. All her life she had an antipathy to France and things French. In this, of course, she was more consistent than many of her contemporaries. The paradox between our constant enmity with France throughout the century and our almost slavish imitation of French customs has often been noticed. (i) About the middle of the century Eliza deplored our employment of "French tailors, French valets, French dancing-masters and French cooks." (ii) while Englishmen starved for want of work. It is easy to understand her disgust at the extravagances of French fashions in a day when the hoop was at its most ridiculous, when the candelabra were really in danger from the plumed head-dresses of the ladies. It is easier still to understand her horror at scepticism and atheism. All her life she was politically 'conservative' in the sense that she was convinced that her Christian duty was to uphold the king and his lawful government. She was all her life biassed in

(1) To take one example only from dress, French silk hose were so much in demand, that Parliament in 1754 prohibited their importation. For 20 years English hose had 'Paris' put into the welts to induce sales." William Felkin, (1876). Hosiery & Lace, (1876).

(11) Carter Talbot Correspondence, I, 268.

favour of the House of Hanover. And yet, she could think independently even here. Long before the War of American Independence she sensed the difficulties of government of land so far removed from London. In fact, she was not in favour of the British Empire at all. She felt that England should concentrate on holding Scotland and Ireland to her. Her devotion to the throne did not prevent her writing in 1779, when George III and his ministers were bungling all along the line, mismanaging Ireland and swiftly losing America: "Our armies march too late, our fleets sail too late, our commissioners negotiate too late, and our concessions are made so late that some will not receive and other not thank us for them". (1)

It never occurred to her, so thoroughly was she a child of her century, that the social structure of the day with its well defined class distinctions was other than divinely arranged. It is difficult for us children of light to get back in our thinking to that state of sublime complacency in things as they were; but it is easier to understand the position if we remember the words of Professor Trevelyan already quoted: "The spirit of aristocracy and the spirit of popular rights seemed to have arrived at a perfect harmony peculiar to the England of that epoch...There was no class hatred". (11) The idea of democracy was as distasteful to Eliza Carter and

(1) Carter to Talbot, III, 117.

(11) History of England, 514.

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her contemporaries as the scepticism of Voltaire. No wonder she thought of the French Revolution as "a tissue of injustice, impiety and rebellion against lawful government." (1) Above all, she was prejudiced against those whose philosophy seemed to undermine the Christian faith. Her attitude to Lord Chesterfield's Letters will be dealt with in another connection. For the present, Montagu Pennington's summing up on her prejudices will suffice: "If the personal characters of admired writers were not good, if the productions of their genius were in any respect likely to do harm, or to be injurious to the cause of religion and virtue; of if there seemed to be the least tendency towards levelling and democratic principles, either in the publications themselves, or in the characters of the authors of them, she then always steadily refused to read such works (if she had been told the tendency of them beforehand) or to have any communication with the writers". (11)

But the last word on Eliza Carter must not be on her prejudices, but on her rich humanity, the almost sublime poise of her personality. There is nothing "enthusiastic" in her story, no wild drinking of life to the lees; but she had a healthy zest in all her activity and she knew the pleasure and the sweetness of life. She loved her books and knew the

(1) Memoirs, I, 446.

(11) Ibid., I, 444.

delight of having them ranged on the walls around her as she worked. She loved her friends and never spared herself in their interests. She loved the earth with its fragrance of roses and jasmines and flowering limes, its songs of birds and its nights of stars: and her heart chilled at the thought of leaving all those loves. "How terrible", she wrote, "to close one's eyes upon the flowery earth and radiant sun, to 'leave the warm precincts of the cheerful day' and sink into a cold, dark, eternal night!" (1) But over her fears her faith triumphed, for her more characteristic attitude was the attitude of the traveller. However pleasant the road might be, however good the company in the wayside inns, she had his homesickness for his journey's end.

Note. Since the above chapter was typed, a letter has appeared in Country Life, (25th April, 1947) from Mr. H. Clifford Smith, intimating that a previously unrecorded portrait of Mrs. Carter has recently come to light. Bequeathed to Dr. Johnson's House, Gough Square, London by Mrs. Pennington Bickford, a great-grand niece of Mrs. Carter and widow of a former rector of St. Clement Danes, Strand, it will be hung when the bomb damage at Dr. Johnson's House has been repaired. "When the painting was brought out from storage," says Mr. Smith "...its surface was almost black with dirt and the canvas torn. It appeared to be a complete wreck, but skilful cleaning has revealed a piece of portraiture of real distinction. ...It shows Mrs. Elizabeth Carter ...at about 60 years of age, with bright, fresh complexion and grey hair partly covered by a pale green veil, dressed in grey-blue silk, with a drapery of emerald-green over one shoulder and the opposite arm. Her hand, holding a quill pen rests on a copy of her translation from the original Greek of the works of Epictetus, ... The portrait which is unsigned has been attributed tentatively to Wright of Derby. It may otherwise be the work of Angelica Kaufmann." There is an accompanying reproduction of the portrait in the magazine.

(1) Memoir, I, 416-417.

CATHERINE TALBOT.

(1721-1770)

"Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace."

Wordsworth, Ode to Duty, Poetical Works,
Oxford, (1923), 492.

"The primal duties shine aloft—like stars:
The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless,
Are scattered at the feet of man—like flowers."

Wordsworth, The Prelude, Book IX, l. 238,
Poetical Works, Oxford, (1923), 887.

"Nature... formed her in a gentle mould," wrote Mrs. Dunscombe of Catherine Talbot in an appreciation in The Gentleman's Magazine (i) two years after her death. And the few references to her in contemporary records bear out this gracious picture and make us wish for far more knowledge of this protégé of Thomas Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury. Secker was in his turn, the protégé of Catherine's grandfather, Bishop Talbot of Durham, for her father, Edward Talbot, Secker's friend, had on his death-bed begged his father to look after the interests of young Secker. Little did Edward Talbot know that his own unselfish interest for his friend was to be the means of security for his widow and yet unborn child, for Catherine was born in 1721, five months after her father's death. Secker married a kinswoman of Mrs. Talbot in 1725 and from then until his death in 1768, she and her daughter resided with him. (ii)

It can be imagined that in Secker's various households, in his successive charges as Rector of St. James's Westminster, as Bishop of Oxford, as Dean of St. Paul's and finally as Archbishop of Canterbury, Catherine would meet some of the best and wisest men and women of her time. Bishop Butler was one of her great admirers. She knew Lyttelton and Bath,

(i) 1772, 257-8.

(ii) His wife died in 1748.

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Mrs. Montagu and the Duchess of Somerset. Perhaps her closest friend was Mrs. Carter, with whom she kept up a delightful correspondence which Professor Elton hailed as "the best and most enduring legacy of the learned, or so-called 'blue-stocking' circle, which otherwise has left so little mark on literature." (i) Richardson, she knew well. She visited him at North End and he discussed the character of Sir Charles Grandison with Mrs. Carter and her, as she reveals in a letter: "Do you know the Grandison family? If you do not, you will to your cost. Oh! Miss Carter, did you ever call Pygmalion a fool for making an image and falling in love with it - and do you know that you and I are two Pygmalionesses? Did not Mr. Richardson ask us for some traits of his good man's character? And did not we give him some? And has not he gone and put them and his own charming ideas into a book and formed a Sir Charles Grandison? And though all the rising generation should copy after him, what good will that do poor us, who must sigh and pine till they are educated?" (ii) On Richardson's death she wrote very warmly of him: "To how

(i) Oliver Elton, Survey of English Literature 1730-1780, (1928), I, 77. I presume he left Mrs. Delany, Mrs. Thrale, Fanny Burney and Hannah More out of the circle in making this assertion.

(ii) Carter - Talbot Corres. I, 362-3.

many will be an inexpressible loss! .. It sits pleasantly on my mind, that the last morning we spent together was particularly friendly, and quiet and comfortable ... he looked so well ... Well, his noble spirit will soon now..I suppose, be freed from its corporeal encumbrance - it were a sin to wish against it, and yet how few such will be left behind". (i)

From early childhood then, Catherine Talbot lived in the Secker household. "Dear Kitty" was "instead of a child" (ii) to Secker and his wife and he took complete charge of her education. This indeed was liberal and included a thorough study of the Scriptures, excellent instruction in French and Italian and a sound training in the appreciation of English literature. Nor were accomplishments forgotten. She was a painter of some merit. Secker's influence on her character must have been very considerable. It is very patent in her written words. He was an orthodox eighteenth century churchman of the best type. His father had been a dissenting minister and he himself was originally intended for the dissenting ministry. That hereditary streak of dissent saved him from coldness and kept him too, from harshness to those of other communions. Weeden Butler published a letter from Secker to Catherine, written when the latter was thirteen.

(i) Carter - Talbot Corres. II, 208-9

(ii) W. Butler, Memoirs of Mark Hildersley, (1799), 578.

It impresses on her the need to be guided by reason rather than by fancy, to remember that human happiness is generally "faint and low", "but that God is benevolent and that the happiness of his creatures is not displeasing to Him". (i). It is Secker's voice we hear when she writes that it is women's duty to make men's homes delightful to them; (ii) when she tells Eliza Carter that although she has few musical gifts she feels it an unsociable thing "to dissent from any rational entertainment that the greater part of the world approves and are fond of, so that I am really grown to love music out of deference to the better taste of others"; (iii) and when she exclaims against the monastic ideal, "That even it should come into anyone's imagination that to renounce all the comforts and accommodations of life, and to shut one's eyes on all the fair beauties of this world, was the way to raise our love and gratitude to the beneficent author". (iv)

The Secker household seems to have been a happy one, but partly at Catherine's expense, as will later be obvious. She acted persistently and ably as her guardian's almoner. There are hints however, even in the affectionate letter already cited, that he was a curb on her spirits and imagination, and Mrs. Duncombe was certainly of that opinion, for she wrote: "She had a luxuriant imagination when she

(i) Hildersley, 577.

(ii) The Gentleman's Magazine, 1770, 76.

(iii) Carter-Talbot Corres. I, 35, 6. (iv) Ibid., I, 235.

ventured to indulge her genius in the fields of fancy; but so sincere was her humility, so diffident was she of her own powers, so awed by the deference she paid to The Respectable Friend with whom she constantly resided, that her elegant and refined taste was sometimes nipped in the bud, and many sweet flowers were often stripped away by the pruning hand of too severe a judgment.⁽¹⁾ Unfortunately it is probable that Secker was largely responsible for Catherine's unhappy love affair. Mrs. Duncombe, whose brief appreciation is a valuable source of information, since other material is so scant, only hints at this, telling us that Catherine "seemed formed to constitute the highest felicity of the married state. She was justly admired and ardently addressed by several; and by a few who were completely worthy of her election; yet by a train of such unaccountable circumstances as often in this world disappoint the fairest prospects, she was confined to the duties of daughter, friend and general benefactor to the unfortunate and poor." (ii) The matter is elucidated in a moving article by an anonymous contributor to The Gentleman's Magazine for August, 1796, (iii)

(1) The Gentleman's Magazine, 1772, 257-8

(ii) Ibid., 258.

(iii) 631-2 Butler in Hildersley says he is "well assured" that the article refers to Catherine Talbot and Mr., later Dr. ^{George} Berkeley (587 n) That the anonymous article was by Eliza Berkeley, the lady who married Mr. George Berkeley is indicated in that lady's lengthy introduction to the poems of her son Mr. George Monck Berkeley (1797), where she refers to a printer's error in the article, 'personally' being printed for 'perpetually'. See The Poems of George Monck Berkeley, (1797) Intro. DC111.

under the title "A Very Singular Tale of Love in High Life".

This magazine also prints two love poems written by Miss Talbot - "I verily believe, the loveliest of females (by which is not meant the most beautiful)". Briefly, according to this article, she fell in love with Mr. George Berkeley, son of Bishop Berkeley, when he was a student. Later he became a prebendary of Canterbury. The match was disapproved by Catherine's guardians and Berkeley married another lady who realised very soon after her marriage, that her husband was in love with Catherine Talbot. This lady who was a woman of character⁽¹⁾ must have had something of the extraordinarily unselfish and unenvious nature of Catherine herself, for not only did the two ladies have a genuine and amiable friendship, but Mrs. Berkeley actually encouraged her husband's association with her friend, saying she knew they both feared God.

Catherine felt she was only doing her duty in obeying her guardians. From the first disappointment of her hopes, she showed the intention to rise above her circumstances, as the following poem indicates:

"In vain, fond tyrant, [Cupid], hast thou tried
To dip in gall thy dart;
Thy poisons all to cordials change
Where wisdom guards the heart.
If black despair be in thy train,
In hers fair patience smiles;
And cheerfulness from duty springs,
The tedious time beguiles.

(1) See her long introduction to the poems of her son Mr. George Monck Berkeley (1797) and a very interesting account of Eliza Berkeley's life in the D.N.B.

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For jealous hate and envy, see
Benevolence appear; -
Whoe'er she be, ye Powers, prolong
And doubly bless her years.

Thinkst thou, blind Boy, my stubborn heart
Will e'er of thee complain?
Or own it drags, in reason's spite,
An heavy hopeless chain?" (1)

This story vouched for by Butler, fits in with the circumstances of Miss Talbot's life. There certainly seems little doubt that she disappointed her own hopes in deference to her guardian's wishes. The duty of cheerful resignation to circumstances runs like the theme of a fugue through her published writings. Even the titles of her essays suggest this theme: On the Accommodation of the Temper to Circumstances, On Resignation to the Will of Providence for example. But in her life time at least, the secret was well kept.

Miss Talbot's published works other than her letters, which will be dealt with later, are in the main very serious and devout. Few modern readers would have time for them, but that is perhaps a graver reflection on modern readers than on Miss Talbot. In her own day, they were extraordinarily popular. She was never willing to publish any of her writings in her life-time, except in periodicals. On her death, however, her Mother entrusted her papers to Mrs. Carter. Of her Reflections on the Seven Days of the Week, more than 25,000 copies were sold between 1770 and 1809. Her collected works

(1) The Gentleman's Magazine, 1796, 632

ran into nine editions, the last being published in 1819.

Catherine's early death, (i) which the anonymous writer in The Gentleman's Magazine says was hastened by her fatal love affair, cut her off from acquaintance with many of the members of the Bluestocking circle. She did not know Mrs. Delany, Mrs. Thrale, Fanny Burney or Hannah More and this is regrettable. Had she know them, we should certainly have had more knowledge of her. But Bluestocking she was in spirit, accomplished, serious, pious, orthodox in her religion, unbending in her morality, a most endearing and a most companionable friend.

(i) It was from "a cancer."

HESTER MULSO, later CHAPONE

(1727-1801)

"Quick, quick - Fling Peregrine Pickle under the toilet - throw Roderick Random into the closet - put The Innocent Adultery into The Whole Duty of Man - thrust Lord Aimworth under the sofa - cram Ovid behind the bolster - there - put The Man of Feeling into your pocket- so, so now lay Mrs. Chapone in sight and lay Fordyce's Sermons open on the table."

Lydia Languish prepares the room for the entrance of Mrs. Malaprop. Sheridan, The Rivals, Works, ed. Crampton Rhodes, (1928), I, 36-7.

The popular conception of Mrs. Chapone in the early nineteenth century was, and perhaps is to-day too, if there is any popular conception of her at all, of a woman of exemplary character, a woman of prudence and principle, to be admired rather than loved. Thackeray, telling us that Miss Pinkerton's establishment had been honoured with the patronage of the "admirable Mrs. Chapone" (1) immortalised her in that light. But to dwell on the facts of her life is to find a very different kind of person, a woman who was a nine-months' bride and then a widow who nearly died of grief, a woman whose sad experience might have made her very bitter, but who was to the very end a most friendly and lovable character. Hester Mulso was the daughter of a remarkably beautiful, attractive and accomplished mother, herself the daughter of a handsome Colonel of the Guards. She alas, was plain. "Poor Chappy, she's so ugly you know, Mr. Seward says," reports Charlotte Burney. (11) One would have thought therefore that her mother would have been glad when her ugly duckling showed remarkable precocity of mind. Not so. She who had been the "observed of all observers" was jealous that attention was diverted from her to young Hester and unkindly tried to nip her talent in the bud. Mrs. Mulso died however, when Hester was in her teens and with great application she set

(1) Vanity Fair, Everyman, 6.

(11) The Early Diary of Francis Burney, (1768-1778), ed. A. R. Ellis, (1907), II, 298.

herself to look after her Father and brothers and to educate herself. Amidst the throng of domestic duties, she found time to study French, Italian, Latin, music and drawing; and at the age of twenty-two her English could satisfy no mean judge, for she then contributed four billets to The Rambler. Thwarted in her early education, she was at first thwarted in her love for Mr. Chapone, the "little attorney" (1) who was not thought to be good enough for her: but her Father's consent to the marriage was at last gained and in 1760, when Hester was thirty-three, the wedding took place. But this was the beginning of new disappointments. Mr. Chapone died suddenly nine months after the marriage and life subsequently became a "tomb-decked" way. First her much-loved Father died, then her three surviving brothers, then many close friends; but the most shattering blow of all was the death of her favourite niece, the only child of her eldest brother, for whom she had written the Letters on The Improvement of The Mind.

After her husband's death, Mrs. Chapone went into a decline and her life was despaired of; but she rallied and though a most sensitive spirit she bore herself bravely through her later trials, till the last year of her life, when the mind began to wander in strange worlds and the will to forget its hitherto high purposes. Small wonder. For to grief there were added the burdens of financial embarrassments. There

(1) Posthumous Works, I, 113.

was considerable difficulty with her husband's affairs through his sudden death, and although her Father left her a little money, Mrs. Chapone was never financially comfortable. It was expected that her uncle, the wealthy Bishop of Winchester, would leave her a good legacy; but Mrs. Delany complained bitterly of his neglect not only of his own blood but of outstanding merit, in merely adding £30 a year, to an existing £20 annuity. (i) I have set down these facts less for their intrinsic interest than for the reason that they throw Mrs. Chapone's character into clearer relief. A woman of principle she was, but there was nothing stiff or inhuman about her. And indeed an intelligent study of her writings, of her letters to Eliza Carter, Samuel Richardson and Sir W. W. Pepys, at once dispels any first, false impression of rigid righteousness.

Mrs. Chapone was one of the flowers in Samuel Richardson's "flower garden of ladies," (ii) a flower from which he sucked much honey and - to use his own metaphor "from a store sweeter than that of Hybla." (iii) In that capacity we are fortunate to see her in Miss Highmore's drawing, reprinted in Mrs. Barbauld's Edition of Richardson's Letters. (iv) There she is the central figure of the little group in the grotto at North End, to which Richardson is reading one of his compositions, as was his custom. Thus, and through unwearied correspondence

(i) Autobiography vi, 19.

(ii) Letters. ed. Barbauld, Intro. clxi.

(iii) Ibid., III, 195.

(iv) II, Frontispiece.

with the ladies in the picture and with others, Richardson educated himself in the knowledge of the feminine heart, playing the part of an ever-unsatisfied mental and emotional 'peeping Tom'. In Mrs. Chapone he had just the kind of tutor he needed, for she was no "neck-or-nothing flatterer." (i) There may be some justification for calling her a "Sir Charles Grandison in petticoats", (ii) although it might be more accurate to call him a Mrs. Hester Chapone in breeches; but there is less justification for describing her as "swinging her censer of womanly incense" (ii) at Richardson's feet. What he said did not always go without question with her. She would maintain against him for example, that love was not a selfish but a generous passion, that while parents might forbid the marriage of their child if they thought it undesirable, they should never force a husband on any child. And while she argued sincerely, vehemently, fearing a little lest she might become 'saucy' or 'disputatious', (iii) Richardson was looking in at the window and Harriet Byron was gradually taking shape and form in his busy little mind. Harriet and Hester were both born in Northamptonshire. Richardson was lacking in experience of the best society and Mrs. Donnellan hinted not very kindly,

(i) Austin Dobson, Samuel Richardson, English Men of Letters (1902), 121.

(ii) G. R. Leslie and T. Taylor, Life and Times of Sir Joshua Reynolds, (1865), I, 452.

(iii) Richardson Letters, Barbauld, III, 175, 213.

to Mrs. Delany that Harriet's lack of politeness of manner was probably due to the faults of Richardson's model.(1) But Mrs. Delany and Mrs. Boscawen, the aristocrats among the Blue-stockings, had the highest esteem for Mrs. Chapone, and Mrs. Delany certainly took hints for her Essay on Propriety, written for her grand-niece, from Mrs. Chapone's Letters on the Improvement of the Mind.

Mrs. Chapone's independence of spirit is evident from her relationship with Samuel Richardson; it is equally evident in her arguments with Dr. Johnson, and Eliza Carter. The Great Bear did not intimidate her and she disagreed profoundly with his pessimistic philosophy. To her the heart of no man was "deceitful and desperately wicked", and the world, far from being a "vale of woe", was becoming a progressively happier place. It is perhaps worth noting here that Mrs. Carter championed the saner, healthier Fielding and Mrs. Chapone the narrower, more intense Richardson. Of Dr. Johnson, however, Mrs. Chapone thought highly although she often disagreed with him, and it is from her pen that we have the delightful description of his treatment of Mrs. Williams. She "was charmed with Johnson's behaviour to Mrs. Williams, which was like that of a fond father to his daughter". (ii)

Mrs. Chapone was in many ways the most typical of all the Bluestockings. A Bluestocking Creed could be most easily made

(1) Autobiography, III, 60.

(ii) Posthumous Works, (1807), I, 73.

from her writings, in particular from the Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, the Letter to a New Married Lady, the letters to Richardson on Filial Obedience and the Matrimonial Creed addressed to him. From these writings one could deduce how far the Bluestockings were from being bluestockings. For example, Mrs. Chapone for all her desire for the education and the cultivation of the female mind, was most interested in the cultivation of the heart. Intellect was certainly unsuccessful in killing emotion in Hester Chapone. Hence probably the strong link with Samuel Richardson. She was ever eager to discuss the subject of love between the two sexes, the one subject in which she felt herself superior to Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Carter. Historically it is a pity that her romance was blighted so early, for it would have been interesting to see how a true Bluestocking romance developed (i) Again, she felt the limitations of the female mind. She would not have her niece learn Greek and Latin because of the dangers of pedantry in a woman, unless she had a very special aptitude for these studies. Mrs. Chapone's independence of spirit has been mentioned, but she was fully convinced of woman's subordinate place in the scheme of things. A husband should by all means find a wife whose "understanding, principles and integrity of heart..would induce him to exalt her to the rank of his first

(i) Fanny Burney's marriage is the only comparable one: but hers was a love late in life. She was forty when she met General D'Arblay.

and dearest friend, and to endow her by his own free gift with all the privileges rights and freedoms of the most perfect friendship" (i) but she "has a divine right to the absolute obedience of his wife, in all cases in which the first duties do not interfere; and as her appointed ruler and head, he is undoubtedly her superior." (ii) She stresses the fact that friendship from a husband, as distinct from lordship, is his gift to bestow or withdraw at will, and is not in his marriage vow.

It remains to say something of Mrs. Chapone's character and influence. She was a most warm-hearted woman with great capacities for friendship. To Sir W. W. Pepys, she wrote, "le besoin d'aimer et d'être aimée will never leave me, I believe, whilst I exist", (iii) and all the Bluestockings speak warmly of her. Fanny Burney sums up their attitude. "Mrs. Chapone herself is the most superiorly unaffected creature you can conceive, and full of agréments from good sense, talents and conversational powers, in defiance of age, infirmities (iv) and uncommon ugliness, I really love as well as admire and esteem her." (v) Her influence is difficult to estimate, but there is little doubt of the success and wide circulation of her most important work, Letters on the Improvement

(i) "Matrimonial Creed." Posthumous Works, II, 151.

(ii) Ibid., 149.

(iii) A. C. C. Gaussen, A Later Pepys, (1904), I, 399.

(iv) Mrs. Chapone suffered from headaches and she was asthmatic.

(v) Diary, II, 239.

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of the Mind. This book, first published in 1773, reached a third edition in 1774 and the author received many requests to undertake the education of the daughters of people of consequence. In 1778 when the King and Queen called to congratulate the Bishop of Winchester on his 82nd birthday, Hester Chapone was staying with her uncle. The Queen led the Princess Royal to her saying, "This is a young lady, who, I hope has profited much by your instructions. She has read them more than once and will read them oftener". (i) The book re-appeared at Edinburgh in 1780, and London editions of it were issued in 1810, 1815, 1829 and 1844. In 1812 and 1821 it was bound with Dr. Gregory's Advice to a Daughter. It is not going too far to say that the idea of a young lady still current at least in the first thirty years of the present century derived inspiration from this book. Mrs. Chapone laid great stress on good breeding, on propriety and elegance; but these had to be based on character, on self-control, on consideration for others. Above all the education of a lady must be based on religion. In days when education is in danger of becoming more and more utilitarian, more examination-ridden, it is not unrewarding to turn over Mrs. Chapone's pages and find her preparing her niece not for any material success, not as a candidate for a Leaving Certificate, but as "a candidate for immortality - as entering the lists for the prize of your high calling - as contending for a crown of unfading glory". (ii).

(i) A. K. Elwood, Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England, (1843), I, 198-9.

(ii) Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, 223.

HESTER LYNCH THRALE, later PIOZZI.

(1741-1821)

Inter erroris salebrosa longi,
Inter ignotae strepitus loquelae,
Quot modis mecum, quid agat requiro
 Thralia dulcis?

Seu viri curas pia nupta mulcet,
Seu fovet mater sobolem benigna,
Sive cum libris novitate pascit
 Sedula mentem:

Sit memor nostri, fideique merces,
Stet fides constans, meritoque blandum
Thraliae discant resonare nomen
 Littora Sciae.

From a Latin Ode addressed by Dr. Johnson
to Mrs. Thrale, from the Isle of Skye, 1773.
Piozzi, Anecdotes of the Late Dr. Samuel
Johnson, (1932), 106-7.

On the two hundredth anniversary of Dr. Johnson's birth, a memorial tablet was erected in the quaint old Welsh Church of Tremeirchion, bearing this inscription:

"Near this place are interred the remains of

HESTER LYNCH PIOZZI

Dr. Johnson's Mrs. Thrale

Born 1741, died 1821" (1)

There must be few lovers of Dr. Johnson who can read the words without a certain 'melting in the blood', for their matter-of-fact simplicity carried the burden of a very human tale. They are haunted at once by all that is dear in human friendship, and by all that is bitter in human disappointment; by the strong gentleness and the pathetic loneliness of a man of powerful feelings and by the abundant variety and the strange unaccountability of a woman of wit and tenderness.

Something of the difficulty of arriving at a fair judgment of Hester Lynch Thrale is indicated by the diametrically opposed views of reliable authorities. Mr. A.E.Newton, for example, confessed that of all the women in the pages of English literature, Mrs. Thrale was the one he would most like to meet.(11) She was, he told us, "a man's woman." Yet Mr.C.E.Vulliamy can find in her nothing but a snob and a

(1) A.E.Newton, Atlantic Monthly, cxxi, 1918, 794.

(11) Op. cit., 783.

pretender, a vain, vulgar woman.(1) The Dictionary of National Biography informs us that Mrs. Thrale "seems to have been rather hard and masculine in character", and Professor Saintsbury wrote that she was "possibly the most feminine person who ever lived with the prerogative exception of Eve." (ii) It is not surprising, therefore, that James Clifford, the best modern biographer of Mrs. Thrale, (iii) concluded an excellent and thorough study by declaring that we shall never discover the mainspring of her character: and his conclusion is just, in so far as we shall never discover the mainspring of that strange creature, Woman. Hester Lynch Thrale seems, in fact, to have been, to adapt Dryden, 'not one but all womankind's epitome.' She would have been abundantly pleased to have been the object of such a controversy, and to have learnt further, that Professor Saintsbury found her "one of the most interesting, if not of the most fascinating studies of the whole century." (iv) "Dear delightful woman", that she was, Mrs. Thrale was not beautiful. She was, however, pretty, plump and petite, "a

(1) See Mrs. Thrale of Streatham (1936); but more particularly Ursa Major (1946). It seems to me highly improbable that Dr. Johnson would have felt deeply and for so long for the woman painted there; but I admit that Mrs. Thrale was a more attractive figure than Mrs. Piozzi.

(ii) The Peace of the Augustans, World Classics, (1946), 236.

(iii) "One of the most infatuated of her modern admirers," says Mrs. G.E. Vulliamy. Ursa Major, 281.

(iv) Op. cit.

poppet in an arm for to embrace". Her colouring was as vivid as her personality. Her eyes were black, her hair was chestnut, and her native Welsh hills had given her a brilliant white and red complexion. A good-natured, kind and unwearied hostess, she knew when to flatter her guests, when to sympathise with them, when to bridle them 'and when to let their laughter flash'. There is abundant evidence that in her younger days at least (that is, before her second marriage) she never monopolized the conversation, and although she loved to chat, she was never then garrulous. She was very proud of having kept Dr. Johnson's secret, the secret of his fear of insanity; and it is therefore hardly fair to say that she was incapable of holding her tongue. On the other hand, she loved to tease people and Fanny Burney was a little afraid to trust her with too many of her confidences. (i) But in nothing was Mrs. Thrale more womanly than in her abundant vitality and in her "infinite variety".

To appreciate her abundant vitality we have to remember the facts of her life as the wife of Henry Thrale, a wealthy brewer. Married by arrangement in October 1763 (a union of pedigree and pence, Welsh pedigree and brewery pence) (ii)

(i) Diary, I, 406.

(ii) Disapproving of the match, her lovable but impecunious father John Salusbury protested "that he would not have his only child exchanged for a barrel of 'bitter'"; fell into a rage and died of an apoplexy. Her dot was provided by an uncle. Her mother did the courting...So without love on either side...she became Mrs. Thrale". A.E.Newton, op. cit., 785.

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she went on bearing children steadily from September, 1764, until June, 1778, when her twelfth child Henrietta Sophia was born, there being an average gap of fifteen months between each childbirth. In addition, she suffered one miscarriage. Born one after another at such frequent intervals, the children were delicate and had little resistance. There was nearly always one of them sick and Mrs. Thrale had to nurse them through some of the most trying diseases: influenza, whooping-cough, mastoiditis, meningitis. When their father died in 1781, there were only six survivors and the last born died exactly two years later. (i) Thrale was as much a man's man as his wife was a 'man's woman'. Boswell tells us of Johnson's "sincere esteem" for him (ii) and Mrs. Thrale wrote, "Johnson says if he would talk more, his manner would be very completely that of a perfect gentleman." (iii) Complete master in his own household, he had a roving eye and gave a wife, who was not lacking in the natural vanity of her sex, much cause for uneasiness, particularly with regard to the angelic Sophy Streatfield. (iv) Over this matter Mrs. Thrale showed her

(i) My own great-grandmother had fourteen children of whom only six survived, but she died at the age of forty-six. Mrs. Thrale lived till she was eighty. Her vitality had a foundation of amazing physical strength.

(ii) Life, I, 494.

(iii) Hayward, (2nd ed.), II, 188-90

(iv) There are many references to the affair in Thraliana. When Sophy visited Thrale after he had suffered a severe stroke in 1780, he said to her, "Who would not suffer even all that I have endured, to be pitied by you?" Thraliana, I, 432. Mrs. Thrale was, however, convinced of Sophy's chastity.

triumphant womanly common sense. She suffered with "silent and patient endurance" what she could not prevent "by more rough and sincere behaviour", (i) but she relieved her feelings in her diary with understandable if not excusable sarcasm. After Thrale's death (April 1781), she wrote,: "Sophy Streatfield is an incomprehensible girl: here she has been telling me such tender passages of what passed between her and Mr. Thrale, that she half frights me somehow, at the same time declaring her attachment to Vyse, yet her willingness to marry Lord Loughborough...the man who runs mad for Sophy Streatfield has no reason to be ashamed of his passion; few people, however, seem disposed to take her for life— everybody's admiration, as Mrs. Byron says, and nobody's choice." (ii)

From the beginning Mrs. Thrale did her utmost to make the marriage a success. She even tried to make the brewer love her, but her tactics were ludicrously unsuccessful. Thrale believed that a woman's place was in the drawing-room or the bed-chamber, and in the first year of her marriage, before the toils of motherhood began, Mrs. Thrale had little to do all day. Riding was forbidden as an unwomanly exercise; so she spent hours scribbling verses to her husband. (iii) But the strategy

(i) Thral., I, 357.

(ii) Ibid., I, 493.

(iii) Two verses from a poem written when Thrale was in Harrow on business will indicate the nature of these activities:

"While Harrow's happier groves detain
Your lingering steps from Streatham's plain;
To think or write of ought were vain
But Harrow on the Hill.

And while my heart in earnest burns,
Your stay the murmuring spindle mourns
Impatient till my love returns
From Harrow on the Hill."

Quoted.
Clifford, Piozzi, 50, from a collection of 5 vols of unpublished MSS. in the possession of Sir Randle Mainwaring, I, 50-51.

that had won the heart of Hester's scholarly tutor completely failed with her practical husband. Later, however, acting on Dr. Johnson's advice, she used sounder methods to make her married life tolerable. She began to take a genuine interest in Thrale's business affairs, helping him very practically with his accounts, urging him to enter Parliament and even electioneering for him. In return for all this she "was treated with just that degree of affection that a man might show to an incubator which although somewhat erratic in its operations, might at any time present him with a son." (i) In his last year or two Thrale drove her nearly frantic with his unwise eating - he wanted lampreys on the day of his death- but she nursed him devotedly. That is the chequered background of the life of the vivacious woman who made Streatham Park one of the most pleasant homes in the England of the day, at least from the point of view of its guests; (ii) who could lose herself completely as a hostess (no matter what grim domestic tragedies were pending), and of whom Dr. Johnson could write that she "soothed twenty years of a life radically wretched." (iii)

The charm of Mrs. Thrale lay partly in the variety of her nature, and that variety is emphasized by the variety of her experiences. An only child, she gave birth to twelve children. Married by arrangement at twenty-two, she married for love at

(i) A. E. Newton, Op.cit, 787.

(ii) Boswell tells us there was "every circumstance that can make society pleasing" at Streatham. Life, II, 77.

(iii) Queeney Letters, 152.

forty-three. The spoilt child of adoring parents had to learn to submit to an exacting and not too faithful husband. Genuinely interested in intellectual matters, in books, in science, in religion, she drank the cup of motherhood to the last dregs. Longing to love and to be loved, ever having some human idol on a pedestal, (i) by choosing Piozzi for her second husband, she suffered the alienation of her five surviving children and of her two best friends, Dr. Johnson and Fanny Burney. The popular, socially secure Streatham hostess, had to fight hard amidst coldness and sneers to regain her prestige, when she returned to London in 1787, the wife of an Italian musician and the object of the most scurrilous journalistic abuse. (ii)

It is scarcely possible to consider Mrs. Thrale without some references to her association with Dr. Johnson, if only because so many hard words have been flung at her for her desertion of him. The Grest Bear, sick and lonely, cannot fail to arouse our pity. For sixteen years, Mrs. Thrale had been his dear and devoted friend and affections born in a man of middle age generally strike deep. The evidence seems to me

(i) Dr. Arthur Collier, her tutor, Dr. Johnson, Mrs. Siddons, Sir James Fellowes were successively on the pedestal.

(ii) An extract from The Morning Herald of 1st February, 1786, anticipating her Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson indicates the type of abuse to which Mrs. Piozzi was subjected. "Report frequently whispered that a conjugal knot would be tied between Mrs. Thrale and Dr. Johnson: that event never took place, and yet Mrs. Piozzi and the Doctor, it seems are shortly to be pressed in the same sheets."

conclusive that, although his stern moral principles kept him utterly loyal to Thrale, Johnson was in love with Mrs. Thrale, and that while Streatham was his "home" she reciprocated with an affection very like love. She was by no means an insensitive woman, and from her early acquaintance with Johnson she had turned to him in her domestic difficulties. When she was defeated by Thrale's "cold carriage" to her, it was Johnson who encouraged her to turn her eyes sometimes from 'Mamma' and the babies and to take an interest in his business affairs. Johnson was, paradoxically enough a cement in the Thrale household, for he at once upheld Thrale's authority and understood Mrs. Thrale's difficulties. Moreover, it seems unlikely that her turbulent nature would have suffered his many rebukes to her, had she not respected him profoundly, and her letters suggest an emotion deeper than respect. Yet the change in her affections was not dishonourable, even although it left Johnson with a broken heart. Had she stopped to think about it, it would have been as unaccountable to herself as it is to us. It is not in the least surprising that she relieved the uneasiness just below the surface of her feelings and tried to justify her second marriage, by elaborating and exaggerating the difficulties of Johnson's nature. In earlier days, these difficulties had meant nothing to her.

What chiefly concerns us with Mrs. Thrale is to consider how far it is correct to call her a Bluestocking. And to do so it is necessary to consider not only her actual relation-

ships with the Bluestockings but also her kinship to them in spirit. As has been already indicated, the chief characteristic of the first Bluestockings was a deliberate interest in intellectual pleasures as contrasted with the (to them) empty 'social pleasures fashionable in the middle of the century. As a protest against the extravagant and idle social life of the day, they arranged and attended 'mixed' assemblies where both sexes could exchange their ideas on literature and life on terms of equality. Dress and the pleasures of the table were alike unimportant to the Bluestockings. Now the earliest of these assemblies were held between 1750 and 1760, but Mrs. Thrale did not even meet Mrs. Montagu until 1775. From that time until her husband's death in 1781 her associations with the Bluestockings were regular and constant. But Mrs. Thrale had been a literary hostess with intellectual interests at Streatham Park for ten years before she met Mrs. Montagu. The literary conversations there took place in the library after breakfast, or in the parlour during or after dinner or again in the library over tea and were of a more informal kind than the conversations at Bluestocking assemblies. Her association with the Bluestockings resulted in Mrs. Thrale's parties becoming more 'mixed'— in early days she had often been the only woman—, in her gaining a coveted entrance to the circle of the intellectual women of her day, and consequently in her having the chance to let her light so shine that she became a powerful rival to the Queen of the Bluestockings. But even in this

period of frequent contacts with the Bluestockings, Mrs. Thrale was never quite at ease in the circle as were Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Vesey, Mrs. Chapone and Mrs. Carter.

Mrs. Thrale's relations with the coterie after her second marriage in 1784 were very stormy. The Bluestockings generally disapproved of the marriage. To begin with they had all sympathy with Dr. Johnson. Secondly, they considered that Mrs. Thrale had married beneath her — a sacrilegious course to take in a community which believed it part of the duty of man to "maintain the subordination of civilized society."⁽¹⁾ She had married a musician, and so been false to her class, for no fiddler could be a gentleman. She had married a Roman Catholic and thus betrayed the religion of her country. She had accompanied him to Italy and therefore deserted her children. But most significantly the most orthodox members of the circle were shocked at an educated woman letting her emotions triumph over her reason. In fact, both Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Chapone declared that Mrs. Thrale must be insane. Mrs. Montagu felt her cheeks burning with shame for Mrs. Thrale and Mrs. Chapone wrote to Sir William Weller Pepys that such "overbearing passions" were not natural in a "matron's bones".⁽¹¹⁾ To be passion's slave at forty-three.⁽¹¹¹⁾ In justice to Mrs. Chapone, however, one

^{Boswell}

(1) Life, II, 328

(11) Gaussen, A Later Pepys, 408.

(111) So prejudiced were the Bluestockings that they even helped to spread the most absurd rumours about Piozzi's treatment of his wife in Italy. The chief accusations were that he was living on Mrs. Piozzi's money and that he had shut her up in a convent. Even the usually truthful and practical "Queen" took part in the rumour-mongering. Blunt, II, 165.

must add that there are hints that Mrs. Thrale pursued Piozzi and that this, not unnaturally, repelled Mrs. Chapone and the other Bluestockings. Fanny Burney states the matter fairly clearly in a letter to Queeney. (i) And it is to be noted that Fanny herself married a Roman Catholic and a foreigner when she was over forty - without losing the respect of her friends. And so, on her return to London society, Mrs. Piozzi had to suffer much slighting. Although she was malicious, one cannot help applauding the courage which she had shown on many occasions previously and now showed in defiance of persistent persecution. And when the Blues sought reconciliation she left them at bay, rejoicing in her triumph. (ii) Only with individuals, chiefly with Mrs. Garrick and Hannah More, did she renew her old intimacy.

Despite the brevity of Mrs. Thrale's association with the Bluestockings and their hostility over her second marriage, there is no doubt at all about the sincerity of her intellectual interests; and in so far as she asserted women's claim to intellect, demonstrated it in her literary pursuits and in her conversation, and encouraged it in her friends, she was a genuine Bluestocking. It is quite consistent, therefore, to consider her with the group when their place in the history of literature

(i) Queeney Letters, 94.

(ii) Thraliana received her malice: "Charming Blues! blue with venom, I think: I suppose they begin to be ashamed of their petty behaviour", she wrote of one rapprochement. Thral. II, 729. Again: "Mrs. Montagu wants to make up with me again: I dare say she does: but I will not be taken and left, even at the pleasure of those who are much dearer and nearer to me than Mrs. Montagu. We want for no flash, no flattery: I never had more of either in my life, nor ever lived so happily". Thral, II, 744-5

is concerned despite Mr. Vulliamy's statement that "the fable of Mrs. Thrale as a Blue Stocking is one that explodes after the briefest examination". (i) It is quite true that she was not persona grata at any time with the inner circle and the reasons are not far to seek. Some of them are implicit in the fact of her second marriage. The fibres of her nature were coarser than those of the other Bluestockings. She was far less controlled, if far more natural than they were. (Part of her charm lay in her complete lack of restraint). She could thoroughly enjoy a coarse jest from Thrale's lips, as the following entry in Thraliana indicates: "Worsdale the painter, the pimp, the — what you will — once told Mr. Thrale as a fact — that he was sitting in the kitchen of a brothel, with the mistress of the house. 'My dear Jemmy!' exclaims she after a pause — 'who would do an ill thing? My wicked neighbours here are breaking and bankrupting every day — but my conscience is clear heaven be praised of wronging every one — and see now how I prosper! Make me thankful! Even whilst I am speaking — all my beds are full!' " (ii) And sometimes her own jests entered in Thraliana were far from decent. "Of poor Sir Thomas Drury and his wife I remember saying that he looked always as if he was making a stink, and her ladyship as if she was smelling it." (iii) Such humour would have horrified Fanny Burney or any of the other Bluestockings, at least from the lips of a woman. (iv)

(i) Ursa Major, 59

(ii) Thral., I, 237.

(iii) Ibid., 156.

(iv) Dr. Monsey's letters to Mrs. Montagu were very coarse.

The decorum, the propriety the conservatism they displayed, all broke down in her. (i) Even in dress Mrs. Thrale showed an extravagance none of the true 'Blues' could have been capable of. (ii) In many ways she was a romantic and a rebel. It is not surprising to discover that her favourite authors were Sterne and Rousseau. Above all, she differed from the Bluestockings in being first and foremost a woman and then a 'Blue'. (iii) The true 'Blue' tended to subordinate her emotions to her intellect, so that her more natural characteristics were suppressed. Now the woman in Hester Lynch Thrale never would be quenched and on the other hand she never developed the masculine quality of mental self-discipline. In age, when there was no Johnson to guide and control her, she ran after the wildest fancies, even busying herself with a proof that Napoleon was the Beast in the Book of Revelation. Of all her critics probably Mr. A.E. Newton came nearest the truth when he compromised and called Mrs. Thrale, "A Light Blue Stocking". In her literary and intellectual interests she certainly deserved to be numbered with the Bluestockings, but in temperament and disposition she was very different from them.

(i) She was, however, conservative in politics to the end. Three Warnings to John Bull before He Dies, (1798), expresses her political attitude.

(ii) When the Piozzi's had settled in Wales, a neighbour described her as "quite a figure of fun, in a tiger skin shawl, lined with scarlet, and only five colours upon her head-dress—on the top of a flaxen wig, a bandeau of blue velvet, a bit of tiger ribbon, a white beaver hat and plume of black feathers—as gay as a lark." Hayward, I, 346-7.

(iii) In this I find myself constantly ranking her with a fiction character - Chaucer's Criseyde. Her humour indeed sometimes suggests the Wyf of Bath.

HANNAH MORE.

(1745-1833)

"My dear Nine"; "My Dearest of Hannahs." David Garrick:,
W. Roberts, Memoirs of Hannah More, I, 114, 117.

"My Dear Saint Hannah." Horace Walpole, Letters, xv, 129

"Many daughters have done virtuously but thou excellest
them all." The Book of Proverbs, xxxi, 29. Quoted, Henry
Thompson, Life of Hannah More.

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The character of Hannah More like that of many men and women of good and godly life has suffered a not altogether fortunate sea-change at the hands of her warmest admirers. If, however, the virility of the saints has been denied them in stained-glass windows, they have at least been allowed to retain a certain symbolical spiritual beauty. But far from being associated with the finer and more beautiful aspects of religion, Hannah More has come to be associated in the popular mind with whatsoever is dull and bleakly pious and unattractive, even repellent. Her reputation has certainly grown grey with the breath of many tracts and religious pamphlets. And so far no biographer has come forward to deliver her from the mists of ignorance and from the fogs of misrepresentation. It is true that her first biographer did his best to present his subject in a fair and pleasant light, and were the Rev. Henry Thompson's volume read, it would correct many false impressions. But even he was too eager to point his moral. Hannah More was a serious woman, a pious woman, even a saintly woman: but she was never in any circumstances a dull woman.

Her life divides naturally into two parts. In the first part, which chiefly concerns me, she enlivened and delighted the whole circle of the Bluestockings with her wit, ingenuity and young charm. In the second part, sobered by the death of her dearly-loved Garrick and strongly influenced by the

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Evangelical Movement, she devoted her life to the cause of humanity. To know the earlier Hannah is to see the later more clearly. The same genius for whose successful tragedy the boxes at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden overflowed with rank and fashion, (i) judged her audience just as acutely in writing popular political pamphlets and religious tracts, so that in the first year of such activity, 2,000,000 copies of the latter were sold. The child who besought her Mother with importunity for a quire of paper and on it scribbled letters to depraved characters and contrite repentant answers to the same, became the woman missionary. It was the same great interest in and love of people, the same unfailing faith in them that penetrated the dark recesses of Mrs. Vesey's wandering spirit, that appreciated the quasi-cynical, artistic Horace Walpole, and that rejoiced to rescue mad Louisa or Harriet of uncertain morals. The young woman for whom ridottos and masquerades, the music of Ranelagh and the lights of Vauxhall had far less attraction than Garrick's breakfast table or Sir Joshua's salon, or an evening with "dear Mrs. Boscawen", was the woman who at forty retired to a quiet country cottage near Bristol, Cowslip Green, (ii) and there devoted herself entirely

(i) "Percy" ran for 21 nights, with Garrick in the leading role. For a delightful article on its success, see E.V.Knox, The London Mercury, xiii, 1926.

(ii) It was as lovely as its name. There really was a vale of cowslips. Hannah More herself tells us of them and of roses and apple blossoms blowing. De Quincey however, found the name "somewhat vulgar and sentimental". Works, xiv, 100.

to the service of her fellow-man. Earlier and later were then inseparably connected. More than anything else, it was the inveterate reformer in her that gave unity to her life. Even in her gardening, she was on a mission: "'From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve' I am employed in raising dejected pinks and reforming disorderly honeysuckles", (1) she wrote to Horace Walpole.

A broken romance gave direction to Hannah More's life, for a strange and hesitant but evidently adoring suitor (ii) settled on her an annuity of £200, as a compensation for "breach". This enabled her to give up her work in the Bristol School which her two sisters were running, and to go to London, as a lady of leisure at the age of twenty-nine (1774). There, she was as fortunate in her introductions as she was charming in her manners and very soon she was a favourite with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Johnson, David and Mrs. Garrick, Mrs. Montagu, and indeed the whole intelligentsia of the day. Between her and Dr. Johnson there was a reciprocity of compliments; and Fanny Burney, Boswell and Mrs. Thrale report that on one occasion the Lion snubbed her sharply for her

(1) Memoirs, II, 73.

(ii) Squire Turner, a neighbour some twenty years older than Hannah, made repeated proposals, but kept postponing the happy day, till her family and friends had to intervene and break off the engagement.

fulsomeness (i) but Johnson himself was not slow with his encomiums. On first meeting Hannah More he greeted her gallantly with a verse from a Morning Hymn she had composed. (ii) He gave extravagant praise to The Bas Bleu, saying there was "no name in poetry that might not be glad to own it," (iii) and informed Beattie that she was the most powerful versificatrix in the English language. (iv) And there is evidence both in Boswell and in Hannah More's Memoirs that Johnson held her in high esteem and teased her as he loved to tease young

(i) We have three accounts of the incident: one from Mrs. Thrale directly, one indirectly (via Fanny Burney's Diary) and one from Boswell (probably via Malone.) Fanny Burney says: "For some time he [Dr. Johnson] heard her with that quietness which a long use of praise has given him: she then redoubled her strokes and peppered still more highly: till, at length, he turned suddenly to her with a stern and angry countenance, and said, 'Madam, before you flatter a man so grossly to his face, you should consider whether or not your flattery is worth having.' (Diary, I, 99-100.) Boswell uses the passage in Mrs. Thrale's Anecdotes, (183) to attack her inaccuracy, quoting an eminent critic, supposed to be Malone. Mrs. Thrale writes: "That natural roughness of his manner so often mentioned, would notwithstanding the regularity of his notions burst through them all from time to time: and he once bade a very celebrated lady, who praised him with too much zeal perhaps, or perhaps too strong an emphasis, (which always offended him) consider what her flattery was worth, before she choked him with it." "Now let the genuine anecdote be contrasted with this— ...At Sir Joshua Reynolds's one evening, she (Hannah More) met Dr. Johnson. She very soon began to pay her court to him in the most fulsome strain. 'Spare me, I beseech you, dear Madam,' was his reply. She still laid it on. 'Pray, Madam, let us have no more of this;' he rejoined. Not paying any attention to these warnings, she continued still her eulogy. At length, provoked by this indelicate and vain obtrusion of compliment, he exclaimed, 'Dearest lady, consider with yourself what your flattery is worth, before you bestow it so freely.'" Boswell, Life, iv, 341.

(ii) Memoirs, I, 48 (iii) Ibid., I, 319.

(iv) W. Forbes, Beattie, II, 146.

ladies. At a dinner party where they were both present, someone mentioned poetry: "Hush, hush," said Dr. Johnson, "it is a dangerous to say a word of poetry before her: it is talking of the art of war before Hannibal". (i) He called her "child", "love", "dearest". (ii) The most pleasant memory we have of them together is on the occasion when he was showing her his former and much-loved College, Pembroke College, Oxford: "You cannot imagine with what delight he showed me every part of his own College...After dinner Johnson begged to conduct me to see the College, for he would let none show it me but himself - 'This was my room; this Shenstone's'. Then after pointing out all the rooms of the poets who had been of his College, 'In short', said he, 'we were a nest of singing birds. Here we walked, there we played at cricket...When we came into the common room, we spied a fine large print of Johnson, framed and hung up that very morning, with this motto: 'And is not Johnson ours, himself a host?' Under which stared you in the face. 'From Miss More's Sensibility.'" (iii) Miss Adams, daughter of Dr. Adams, Master of Pembroke and Johnson's host, tells us that although Johnson was in ill-health on this occasion, he talked a great deal because of his fondness for Hannah More. (iv) Her associations with Boswell were, as one might expect, not entirely happy. It was a case of oil and

(i) Memoirs, I, 251. (ii) Ibid., I, 67.

(iii) Ibid., I, 261. (iv) Life, iv, 151.

water. In 1781 she met him coming upstairs at a party, "much disordered with wine" and his maudlin addresses disgusted her. (i) After Johnson's death, she requested Boswell to "mitigate some of his asperities" in the Life." He answered roughly, "he would not cut off his claws nor make a tiger a cat to please anybody." (ii) At this time, her greatest friends were David and Mrs. Garrick who were appreciative both of her talent and of her goodness. Garrick called her "Nine" or "All the Nine" (i.e. Muses) and Mrs. Garrick called her, her chaplain. They were most hospitable to her, and kind in sickness. There is a delightful description of Garrick taking delicacies to her- "a minced chicken in a stewpan, a canister of her [Mrs. Garrick's] fine tea and a pot of cream" (iii) on his way to the Turk's Head to dine with Johnson's Club.

But perhaps the friendship that above all symbolises Hannah More's Bluestocking days, is the friendship with Horace Walpole. Him she met in 1781, and until his death in 1797 they had a most delightful relationship and correspondence. Each stimulated latent virtue in the other while they shared many common interests and sympathies. Besides giving her the invaluable friendship of a man of the world, comparable to the friendship Fanny Burney received from "Daddy" Crisp, Horace Walpole tapped delightful springs of wit in Hannah More, and

(i) Memoirs, I, 210.

(ii) Ibid., I, 403

(iii) A.M.B.Meakin, Hannah More, (1911), III.

and she in her turn found deeper springs in Horace Walpole than his brilliant correspondence ever seems to suggest. Of course he teased her for her goodness, for her "darling gluttony, charity", (i) secretly regretting that she denied herself so many of the good pleasures of life. "However," he writes playfully, "I do not pity good people who out of virtue lose or miss any pleasures. Those pastimes fleet as fast as those of the wicked; but when gone, you saints can sit down and feast on your self-denial, and drink bumpers of satisfaction to the health of your own merit." (ii) On another occasion he wrote, "Adieu! pray write. I need not write to you to pray: but I wish, when your knees have what common people call a worky-day, you would employ your hands the whole time." (iii) In her philanthropic and humanitarian activities, she could always rely on his wisdom and on his financial support, although he grumbled pleasantly at her self-sacrifices. But it is best to let him speak for himself: "It is very provoking that people must always be hanging or drowning themselves, or going mad, that you forsooth, Mistress, may have the diversion of exercising your pity and good-nature, and charity and intercession, and all that bead-roll of virtues that make you so troublesome and so amiable, when you might be ten times more agreeable by writing things that would not cost one above half-a-crown at a time. You are an absolutely walking hospital". (iv).

(i) Letters, XIV, 290

(ii) Ibid., XIV, 52.

(iii) Ibid., XIV, 165.

(iv) Ibid., XIV, 246.

There was a deep understanding between the two, the curious kind of appreciative understanding that is sometimes born between a deeply religious but intellectual woman and a brilliant man of the world. She anticipated the horror Walpole would feel at the slaughter of the French Revolution, over which he displayed a most sensitive spirit.(i) One of the last acts of his life was to present her with a Bible.(ii)

There is certainly room for a new biography of Hannah More, for a biography which will do justice, alike to the "Nine" of Garrick, to the "Saint Hannah" of Walpole and to the single-minded reformer, the writer of most successful political propaganda, the friend of John Newton and William Wilberforce, the pioneer of education among the poor. The various parts of her life are not inconsistent with one another. She was in her young days "darkly, deeply, beautifully blue"(iii) mocking the elaborate dress of the time. At an evening party she tells us, eleven damsels "had amongst them on their heads, an acre and a half of shrubbery, besides slopes, grass-plots, tulip-beds, clumps of peonies, kitchen-gardens and green-houses."(iv)

(i) One letter in particular demonstrates the shock Walpole felt. In it he keeps coming back and back and back again to the subject, and finally says, "...all my ideas are confounded and overturned; I do not know whether all I ever learned in the seventy first years of my seventy-five was not wrong and false; common sense, reasoning, calculations, conjecture from analogy and from history of past events, all, all have been baffled." Letters, XIV, 177.

(ii) Thompson, 162.

(iii) Byron, Don Juan c.IV, CX, Poetical Works VI, 215.

(iv) Memoirs, I, 100.

It has been conjectured that she assisted Garrick in his "make-up" for laughing these enormities out of fashion, by appearing on the stage with a complete vegetable crop on his head, "including glass cucumber frames and a pendent carrot at each ear." (i) To her dying day Hannah More was conservative in politics and in her conception of the social order. Mr. E. M. Forster (whose great-aunt was her god-daughter) writes, "Unless her pupils were farmers' sons, she did not allow them to write; and she was horrified at the suggestion they should acquire history or science, while the suggestion that she had anything to learn from them would have evoked the French Revolution in her mind". (ii)

But, and this is a most significant fact, Hannah More was the only major Bluestocking who was deeply touched by the Evangelical Revival. The result was almost inevitable. The moral rectitude, the Christian principle, the strong sense of duty, the serious purpose, the pride in their sex, so evident in the Bluestockings but often so formal, were now touched with fire and blazed forth in a life of devoted self-sacrifice. Limitations Hannah More had to the end, many of them the limitations of her day, but she was not a child of the eighteenth century for nothing. The limitations of her reforming ideas impress one less than the undefeated scope

(i) R.B.Johnson, Letters, Intro. 9.

(ii) The Nation and The Athenæum, 1926.

of her tolerant charity. That is nowhere more evident than in the zealous and willing help she gave for the relief of the emigrant French clergy. In 1793, she published Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont, the proceeds of the sale of which were to go to the relief of the distressed clergy. In a prefatory note, she anticipated the "popish" charges later brought against her. "Christian charity is of no party. We plead not for their faith, but for their wants. And let the more scrupulous who look for desert as well as distress in the objects of their bounty, bear in mind that if these men could have sacrificed their conscience to their convenience, they had not now been in this country. Let us show them the purity of our religion by the beneficence of our actions". (i) It is a fitting note to close on, because it so happily expresses Hannah More at her best, where she combined the rational tolerance of the eighteenth-century Bluestockings and the warm charity of the Evangelical Revival.

(i) Thompson, 142.

FRANCES BURNEY, later D'ARBLAY.

(1752-1840)

"Down with her, Burney!—down with her!—spare her not! attack her, fight her and down with her at once! You are a rising wit, and she is at the top:...So at her, Burney—at her and down with her." Dr. Johnson incites Fanny Burney to rivalry with Mrs. Montagu.

Frances Burney, Diary, I, 115.

When Fanny Burney was a child, her family called her the "old lady" because of her sagacious air. The epithet is indicative, for although the Bluestocking movement was launched while she was yet a babe-in-arms, there are qualities in her which keep reminding us of the great women of a previous generation. She was, in fact as blue as any of her senior Bluestocking friends, and much more blue than her intimate confidante, Mrs. Thrale. The Bluestocking movement, as has been indicated, began with a revolt against the fashionable routs of the day, against card-playing and extravagance in dress. Fanny Burney had little time for dress and less for cards. This indifference to fashion in clothes and amusement contributed to making her Court life, as Second Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte, an utter misery, for her duties were chiefly connected with the Queen's dressing: (1) and the vulgar Mrs. Schwellenberg, Keeper of the Robes, so tyrannised over Fanny's leisure, that she had constantly to be ready to play cards with her. And she loathed the necessity of the formal dress of the Court. After her release, when she visited the Court on the King's birthday, it was a huge delight to her to be able to appear without hoop, flowers or furbelows. Again like the other Bluestockings, (and like her own Evelina) but unlike Hester Lynch Thrale, she shrank

(1) Horace Walpole reported someone as saying that Fanny was "promoted to fold muslins". Letters, XIV, 58. Lady Llanover says Queen Charlotte used to complain that "Miss Burney could not learn to tie the bow of her necklace on Court days without giving her pain by getting the hair at the back of her neck tied in with it." Delany, Autobiography, V, 361ⁿ.

from all vulgarity. And while she never considered politics as a feminine preoccupation, she was herself from start to finish a thorough Tory. She shared also the inveterate itch for scribbling of the older Bluestockings. "Francesca Scriblerus," she signed herself in an early letter to her father. From the age of ten, she was "popping her thoughts" down on paper. And even in appearance she resembled the Blues, for she was "nearsighted" like Mrs. Montagu and Eliza Carter, and like them too, she had a "murderous stoop."

Most of the Bluestockings lived to a very ripe old age and here again Fanny Burney was with them. It is curious to remember that it is little over a hundred years since she died. Moreover the eighty-eight years of her allotted span were interesting and eventful. The first part of her life was spent in that most stable period of the eighteenth century, 1750-1780; a period of domestic peace; the last part saw the fall of Napoleon and the passing of the first Reform Bill. Fanny Burney's Bluestocking activity was practically confined to her pre-Court days, and for that reason alone we are hardly concerned with her later life. But it may just be observed that while her later life was very happy and full, and while her Diary continues to be interesting to the end of her life, her heyday was certainly in the eighteenth century. "Daddy" Crisp was more prophetically right than even that shrewd man realised, when he wrote to her in 1782: "This is the harvest time of your life, your sun shines hot; lose not a moment then, but

Her later novels are progressively less readable.

make your hay directly." (i) [^] In their own day, however, at least the first three were enthusiastically received. Boswell, that worshipper of the successful was glad to shake hands with Fanny Burney at Mrs. Thrale's after the enthusiastic reception given to Cecelia (ii) and Kaimes thought this novel was equal to Tom Jones. (iii) In three months, 3,500 copies of Camilla were sold and Jane Austen thought it a masterpiece. The Wanderer was a literary failure but 3,600 copies were sold at two guineas each. ~~Her later novels are progressively less readable.~~ Yet Horace Walpole was right when he wrote to Hannah More in 1796, criticising the "deplorable Camilla." Madame D'Arblay had "reversed experience." "This author knew the world and penetrated character before she had stepped over the threshold; and now she has seen so much of it, she has little or no insight at all." (iv) The distribution of material in Austin Dobson's "Fanny Burney" is significant. The main part of the book deals with her childhood and youth and the part of her life which concerns us. One chapter follows on her Court experiences (July 1786-July 1791), and the final, slightly shorter chapter is called, Half a Lifetime.

Like Eliza Carter, but unlike Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Chapone Mrs. Thrale and Hannah More, Fanny Burney was not a precocious child. It is said that she did not know her letters at the age of eight. On the other hand she was enthusiastically

(i) Diary, II, 98.

(ii) Malahide Papers, XV, 185.

(iii) Ibid., 290.

(iv) Letters, XV, 415, 421-2.

scribbling at ten; so her progress must have been fairly rapid. Short-sightedness and shyness, however, combined to make her rather an odd and not a very prepossessing little (1) figure. But her Mother saw that Fanny Burney had natural parts and that however gauche she might be in company, she could make very penetrating comments "en famille." She was not beautiful, despite the lovely portrait by her cousin Edward Burney in the National Portrait Gallery, said to be inspired by his affection for her; but her face was evidently very mobile and seems to have recorded unmistakably the changes in the ever-moving, observant mind. Never was face a surer index to mind. Her education like Mrs. Montagu's was casual, for although two of her sisters went to Paris to be educated, it was feared that Fanny might be too easily persuaded to adopt the religion of France and of her adored maternal grandmother, and she remained at home. Yet she was well read. Plutarch, Homer, Hume, Hooke, Johnson, Goldsmith, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, are a formidable list of authors, which proves plainly as Austin Dobson says that, "Fanny's close attention to braid-stitch, cross-and-change, pinking, pointing, frilling and all the niceties of that needlework which her step-mother regarded as so important to young persons, did not leave her without leisure for literature." (11)

(1) She was short and slight, "a small cargo for the Chessington Coach" said Samuel Crisp. Early Diary, Introduction, [XXXII].

(11) Austin Dobson, Fanny Burney, English Men of Letters, (1903), 27.

The gods were good to Fanny Burney, although they spared her long on the earth, for not only was she born into a happy and lively family, but she was blessed with the encouragement of loving friends. Dr. Johnson was attracted by the "consanguineous unanimity" (i) of the Burney household, and while the painters, poets, musicians, artists and actors who visited at Poland Street or at No. 35, St. Martin's Street were a more heterogeneous and cosmopolitan crew than Fanny Burney's later Bluestocking circle, they gave her plenty of scope to exercise her naturally quick powers of observation. The only setback, if indeed it was a setback, which Fanny Burney received when she was developing, was the restraint her step-mother put on her 'scribbling,' so that her conscience bade her burn the MS of her first novel. She was singularly fortunate in her friendship with Samuel Crisp, that disillusioned and impoverished man of the world who had retired to Chessington, Surrey, and whose house became a playground and a sheltering haven for the Burney family. "Daddy" Crisp as the young Burneys called him, was a man of wide experience and culture, who had an acute sense of values. Fanny wound herself round his heart by her endearing ways and letters, so that with his last breath he told her she was "the dearest thing to him on earth." (ii) Fanny would have done well had she

(i) Samuel Johnson, Letters, ed. G. Birkbeck Hill, (1892), II, 237.

(ii) Burney, Memoirs, II, 318.

taken more of his advice. He warned her early against the stiffness of style she was to fall into in her latest writings. In impressionable years, Chessington was to Fanny Burney what Streatham Park was to Dr. Johnson late in life. There, were pleasant prospects and ample supplies of country food: butter, chickens, eggs. Above all there was a circumambient air of warmth and friendliness and encouragement. The satisfaction between host and guest was mutual and it is not surprising to learn how 'Daddy Crisp' felt his loss when Fanny Burney attached herself so firmly to Hester Lynch Thrale and Streatham Park.

From the time of the publication of Evelina in 1778, she received every encouragement in her labours from her wide circle of friends. Her wildest delight was in hearing of Dr. Johnson's approval. This set her dancing a jig round a mulberry tree at Chessington where she was staying. (i) But the Doctor's approval was expressed over and over again in his most winsome manner. He learnt many of the conversations in the book by heart, and kept teasing Fanny by mimicking the characters. On one occasion he turned suddenly round on her, laughing, and said: "Only think Polly! Miss has danced with a lord." (ii) He further said that Henry Fielding never did anything to equal the second volume of Evelina. The remark is hardly just, for the novel of the broad highway and the novel of the tea-table can hardly be pitted against one another; but praise from such an authority must have been sweet to the young

(i) Diary, I, 49.

(ii) Echoing Miss Branghton, Evelina, ed. 1794, II, p. 70

authoress's ear. And the passion swelled from other powerful voices. Reynolds, who took up the volume at table, had to be fed whilst he read it, and both he and Edmund Burke sat up all night to finish it. The book was, in fact, a best-seller. At Brighton a gentleman told Mrs. Thrale and Fanny Burney that he could never get Evelina from the library, as readers kept passing it on to other people, so that it was hardly ever returned.

How much we are indebted to Fanny Burney's Diary for information about the major Bluestockings, in whose company she moved so naturally, will be evident from this thesis, but we are even more indebted to her for precious glimpses of some of those many women who attended the Bluestocking Assemblies but were not leaders of the movement. It is she who gives us the inimitable picture of Sophy Streatfield's tears. S. S., as she was commonly nicknamed, was a most curious mixture. A classical scholar, she was also a ravishing beauty.⁽¹⁾ She had irresistible charms for men and for women. Although she had insinuated herself into the heart of Thrale, Mrs. Thrale could still not deny her charms, however satirical she had to be privately in self-defence. Sophy was famous for her ready tears. One day Mrs. Thrale coaxed her to cry "...two crystal tears

(1) Dr. Johnson said, however, that "taking away her Greek she was as ignorant as a butterfly". Burney Diary, I, 231. Sophy Streatfield had the same tutor as Mrs. Thrale, Dr. Collier.

came into the soft eyes...and rolled gently down her cheeks! Such a sight I never saw before, nor could I have believed. She offered not to conceal or dissipate them: on the contrary she really contrived to have them seen by everybody. She looked indeed uncommonly handsome: for her pretty face was not, like Chloe's, blubbered: it was smooth and elegant, and neither her features nor complexion were at all ruffled, nay, indeed she was smiling all the time." (i)

We have also in the Diary, delightful glimpses of the charming Mrs. Garrick, of the frank Dorothy Gregory, of the spirited Mrs. Cholmondeley, sister of Peg Woffington, of the lovely Duchess of Devonshire. So, for example, she tells us how warmly Mrs. Garrick greeted her at a reunion at Mrs. Ord's after she had been immured at Court for some time. She frankly embraced her, saying in her broken English, "Do I see you, once more, before I tie my tear little spark? for your father is my flame all my life, and you are a little spark of that flame!"⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ We learn that Dorothy Gregory and Fanny Burney were "elbow companions"⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ at Bluestocking Assemblies. Fanny admired Dorothy's Scottish "plumpness of honesty" and her equally Scottish disinclination to flattery.^(iv) We see "gay, flighty, entertaining, and frisky" Mrs. Cholmondeley^(v)

(i) Diary, I, 238-9. (ii) Ibid., II, 393. (iii) Ibid., I, 373.
(iv) Ibid., I, 353. (v) Ibid., I, 438.

as the first person who publicly praised and recommended Evelina among the wits, and that, even before she knew who had written it. And one day at Bath, Fanny reports, she caught sight of a figure in a sedan-chair kissing her hand and bowing to her. It was none other than the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire and Fanny sensed the irony of making acquaintance with the feminine leader of the Opposition, immediately on her release from Court. (i)

Bluestocking by nature, close friend of several of the major Bluestockings (ii) and chronicler of the whole circle, Fanny Burney is of great importance in our discovery. It only remains to say a word on her extreme sensibility, (iii) for sensibility was to the second half of the eighteenth century what psychological analysis ^{has been} ~~was~~ to the first half of the twentieth. Some of the older folks would have none of it. (iv) Fanny's sensibility is omnipresent in her Diary and Austin Dobson reminds us that like Mme. de Sévigné and Mrs. Delany, she blushed very easily. "Miss Burney possessed an "extrême facilité à rougir". (v) And so we leave the little

(i) Diary, V, 32-3. (ii) Mrs. Chapone, Mrs. Delany, Mrs. Thrale.

(iii) "Sensibility is continually extracting the excess of misery or delight from every surrounding circumstance." Mysteries of Udolpho. Chapter viii.

(iv) Amongst the older Bluestockings, Mrs. Delany and Mrs. Chapone were both women of 'sensibility' as is partly indicated by their enthusiasm for Richardson. Mrs. Delany complained that Fielding's Amelia neither makes one laugh nor cry. "There are some dismal scenes described, but there is something wanting to make them touching". Autobiography, III, 79. Catherine Talbot's natural tendency to sensibility was suppressed by Archbishop Secker, Mrs. Thrale's by her own wit and restlessness. Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Carter were less naturally disposed to the indulgence of their feelings, but, in any case, they checked them on principle.

(v) Diary, I, 337.ⁿ

"character-monger" (1) and we cannot be grateful enough to her for acting the part of "the chiel" and for so busily "takin' notes" among the Bluestocking ladies to our immense profit.

(1) Dr. Johnson's epithet. Diary, I, 90.

THE BLUESTOCKING ASSEMBLIES.

"Remember, that Heaven is always represented
as a society" Mrs. Carter in a letter to Mrs. Vesey.
Letters from Mrs. Carter to Mrs. Vesey added to the
Carter-Talbot Correspondence, III, 4.

"I'm engaged to the Lady Bluebottle's collation
To partake of a luncheon and learn'd conversation."
Byron, The Blues, Collected Poetical Works, (1898), 579.

To understand the Bluestocking movement is to have a key to the second half of the eighteenth century in England, for that movement expresses in so many ways the salient characteristics of the period. It is true that in one sense the Bluestocking ladies were eccentric in the real sense of the term. Their activity in many directions was not typical of the activity of the women of their class and century. Their morals and habits of life separated them by a gulf from the ordinary life of their day. And yet, in other respects they reflect their century admirably. One might say that the woof of their life was the same as that of their class and century but that the warp was different. Features of both the warp and the woof have been noted in the chapter on the general characteristics of the Bluestockings, for the factors in their way of life which are representative of the eighteenth century are worthy of note as well as the factors peculiar to themselves. Nowhere do they represent their century more than in their social life. It was a "clubbable" age, an age of great social solidarity, of an instinctive and delightful appreciation of man's need for company. Now one of the first-fruits of good company is good conversation, and it is not surprising therefore to find the eighteenth century shaping and perfecting the art of conversation. (1) And the Bluestocking

(1) Voltaire recommended sociability and conversation to Mme. Du Châteaufort in her boredom. "...les douceurs de la société, de la conversation sont des plaisirs aussi réels que celui d'un rendez-vous dans la jeunesse. Faites bonne chère, ayez soin de votre santé, amusez-vous quelquesfois à dicter vos idées, vous aurez ainsi deux grands plaisirs, celui de vivre avec la meilleure société de Paris, et celui de vivre avec vous-même." R. Picard. Les Salons littéraires et la Société Française, (1943), 240. It is interesting to put beside this Dr. Johnson's advice to Mrs. Thrale in her letter; "Be not solitary; be not idle."

means of expressing this social quality (1) of which good conversation is an offshoot, were very varied and engaging. Merely to describe the assemblies of Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Vesey, Mrs. Ord and the other Bluestocking hostesses is to give less than a comprehensive picture of the Bluestocking movement in action, although the assemblies were many and varied. The movement worked like a leaven through the great mass of society from the middle of the century when Mrs. Chapone, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Vesey gave it its first impetus. They, and the other Bluestocking hostesses were partly instrumental in lighting those lamps of culture that were beginning to shine one by one all over England. Until the end of the seventeenth century, the Court had been the one great arc lamp, the one great focus of society. Then gradually, first in an ever-widening circle in and around the metropolis, then here and there all over the country, the illumination began. The London assemblies were certainly the most typical and the most persistent Bluestocking activity: but at innumerable house-parties in pleasant riverside villas on the Thames, at the villa of Garrick at Hampton Court, of Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill, of Mrs. Walsingham at Thames-Ditton, at Lord Lyttelton's enchanting estate at Hagley, at pleasant Bulstrode near Windsor, the seat of the Duchess of Portland, at the fashionable resorts at Tun-

(1) Sociability is radically the right word, but it has been emptied of its earlier rich content.

bridge, at Bath, at Sunning Wells, at Brighton (then Bright-helmstone), at innumerable breakfasts and dinner-parties and tea-parties, not the least important work of the movement went on.

But it is with the London assemblies that I am chiefly concerned and with those where ladies were hostesses, rather than those where gentlemen were hosts. These assemblies varied according to the character of the individual hostess and the company who sprang to her magnet, so that accounts of what actually took place tend to be conflicting. But the fundamental aim of the assemblies is interestingly adumbrated for us in the tenth number of The Rambler (1750). Hester Mulso, better known as Hester Chapone, under the character of Lady Racket sends compliments to that censor of manners, the Rambler, and informs him she will have cards at her house every Sunday where he will be sure of meeting all the good company in town. She longs to see the torch of truth produced at an assembly, and to admire the charming lustre it will throw on the jewels, complexions, and behaviour of every dear creature there. To this the Rambler replies: "At card tables, however brilliant, I have always thought my visit lost: for I could know nothing of the company but their clothes and their faces. I saw their looks clouded at the beginning of every game, with a uniform solicitude, now and then, in its progress, varied with a short triumph; at one time wrinkled

with cunning; at another deadened with despondency, or by accident flushed with rage at the unskilful or unlucky play of a partner. From such assemblies...I was quickly forced to retire; they were too trifling for me when I was grave and too dull when I was cheerful." And he goes on to suggest, that, Lady Racket 'light up her apartments with myrtle.' That was what the Bluestockings were trying to do. The distinctive feature of all these assemblies from 1750-1800 was the place given to conversation,

"That noblest commerce of mankind
Whose precious merchandise is mind." (i)

Conversation was to take the place of cards which had so long tyrannised over fashionable life.

"Long was society o'er-run
By whist, that desolating Hun;
Long did quadrille despotic sit,
That Vandal of colloquial wit;
And Conversation's setting light
Lay half-obsured in Gothic night." (ii)

Implicitly, then, the movement had for its object the raising of the moral and mental tone of fashionable society, and from the first these gatherings were arranged and supported by people of irreproachable moral character.

Initially the idea was that there would be "no ceremony, no cards, no supper." (iii) People need not wear formal dress, (hence the name, "Bluestockings.") and refreshments were to be

(1) More, "The Bas Bleu," Poems, (1816), 81. The alternative title of the poem is Conversation.
(ii) Ibid., 69.
(iii) Pennington, Carter Memoirs, I, 465.

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very light. Mrs. Vesey and Mrs. Ord seem to have given many parties of that nature. Hannah More's poem, The Bas Bleu (1786), was addressed to Mrs. Vesey and we may take it that the repast described there was typical of her assemblies and of many of those of the other hostesses too.

"Still be thy [Conversation's] nightly offerings paid
Libations large of lemonade!
On silver vases, loaded, rise
The biscuits' ample sacrifice!
Nor be the milk-white streams forgot
Of thirst-assuaging, cool orgeat. (i)
Rise, incense pure from fragrant tea
Delicious incense, worthy thee."

But there is no doubt at all that many Bluestocking parties were dinner-parties. Mrs. Montagu was satirised because her dinners and diamonds were as magnetic as her interest in letters. (ii) Mrs. Thrale's parties at Streatham were certainly dinner-parties, although at her London houses in the Borough and at Grosvenor Square, she may have given the more typical evening-parties as well. And there are many references in contemporary memoirs to dinner-parties at Mrs. Garrick's and Mrs. Walsingham's where the company was very "blue". It seems likely that often the lady hostesses followed the practice of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

(i) Orgeat was "a syrup or cooling drink made originally from barley, subsequently from almonds, and orange-flower water" O.E.D. The first reference given in the O.E.D. is from The Connoisseur in 1754, (No. 39). It is interesting that the O.E.D. quotes a passage from The Daily Telegraph in 1864, (21st September), in which orgeat is mentioned with ices, coffee and lemonade as "light refreshments."

(ii) Leslie, Reynolds, I, 452: Stuart, Gleanings, 61

A small select company were invited to dinner and a much larger party were invited for "blue" afterwards.

In later days, Mrs. Montagu seems to have reverted to a kind of party she gave as early as 1750- a literary breakfast, (1) for Fanny Burney described such an entertainment given on a fine May morning in 1792, where she had a prodigious meal of cold chicken, ham, and fish. And even later, in consequence of her enthusiasm for things French after her visit to the French capital, (1776), she introduced the custom of the after-dinner the which Hannah More thought ridiculous: "Perhaps you do not know that a thé is among the stupid follies of the writer. You are to invite fifty or a hundred people to come at eight o'clock; there is to be a long table or little parties at small ones: the cloth is to be laid as at breakfast: everyone has a napkin; tea and coffee are made by the company, as at a public breakfast; the table is covered with rolls, wafers, bread and butter; and what constitutes the very essence of a thé, an immense load of hot buttered rolls and muffins, all admirably contrived to create a nausea in persons fresh from the dinner table. Now of all nations under the sun, as I take it, the English are the greatest

(1) We thus breakfasted to-day at "My lady Montagu's in a closet lined with painted paper of Pekin, and adorned with the prettiest Chinese furniture; a long table covered with pellucid linen, and a thousand glittering vases presented to the view coffee, chocolate, biscuits, cream, butter, bread toasted in many ways and exquisite tea. You must understand that good tea is to be had in London only. The mistress of the house, though worthy to be served at the table of the gods, poured it out herself as the custom demands, which to obey, English ladies put on a close-fitting, marvellously becoming dress, a white apron, a pretty little straw-hat..." (1750). From Mme. du Bocage, Lettres Sur l'Angleterre. Oeuvres Complètes, 3 vols., (1762), 12-13. Trans. Huchon, Mrs. Montagu, 205.

fools. Because the Duke of Dorset in Paris, where people dine at two, thought this would be a pretty fashion to introduce, we, who dine at six must adopt this French translation of an English fashion, and fall into it as if it was an original invention, taking up our own custom at third hand." (i) And the general contemporary opinion was that Mrs. Montagu's assemblies in the eighties and nineties lost their original character and became as hot, as crowded, as fashionable as the drums and routs of the earlier century had been. "Buttered muffins and cold chicken smothered wit." (ii)

The important fact to notice here is that the Bluestockings, with the definite purpose of improving the moral tone of society arranged instead social gatherings where good conversation supplied the place of cards. Such were the essential features of the assemblies, but these were as varied in nature as the hostesses themselves. There were little intimate dinner-parties at Mrs. Garrick's, or fine dinners at Mrs. Montagu's, such as the one described by Boswell where there were seven guests and seven or eight servants, burgundy, champagne, "and in short a rich variety of wines"; (iii) assemblies learned or fashionable, dramatic or literary, solemn or spirited, small or unwieldy, or combining several of these characteristics.

(i) Roberts, Memoirs, II, 114.

(ii) Blunt, Mrs. Montagu, II, 8. The matter of food will be discussed in connection with the French salons.

(iii) Boswell, Malahide Papers, ix, 82. This dinner was more like the dinners given by Mme. de Geoffrin for the guests were all men. Mme. de Geoffrin thought the presence of women tended to be distracting, and only Mlle. de Lespinasse was admitted to her dinners.

The success of the individual assemblies as well as the nature of them, depended to a large extent on the individual hostesses. Contemporary chroniclers are quite unanimous in declaring that Mrs. Montagu's assemblies outshone all the rest. She seems to have had a brilliant share of the qualities necessary for a salon hostess. To begin with she loved the part, and even to hoar hairs she never lost the determination to make her house the centre of the most distinguished company in London- with the exclusion only of those who did not conform to her moral standards- in the second half of the eighteenth century. We have glimpses of her as she neared her eightieth birthday, amongst the most dazzling companies in her "Château Portman," hobbling along on a stick, peering at her guests from her failing and faded blue eyes, eyes that had seen familiarly, all that beauty, all that wealth gave to a great century. Having the natural ambition to shine socially, Mrs. Montagu was very fortunate to have both the natural gifts and the material means necessary to fulfil it. To begin with, her strong will triumphed completely over her delicate body. Sometimes indeed, one feels that the "fiery soul" overworked "the tenement of clay." Again, none of her contemporaries denied her wit, and Mrs. Thrale whose own conversation was most animated and spirited, used to write down Mrs. Montagu's bon mots. (i) One night the company

(i) In Thraliana, Johnson is reported to have said of the conversation of Burke and Fox, "Burke had more bullion but the other coins faster." "This, might be said of Mrs. Montagu and me," was Mrs. Thrale's comment. Thraliana, 460.

at her house was late in breaking up, and Mrs. Montagu urged them to stay later, "but they pleaded the watchman's warning of 'Past twelve o'clock!' 'Poh!' said she, 'what nonsense to mind a fellow who is never half-an-hour together in the same story.'" (i) When Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Thrale were pitted against each other as they were at Bath on one holiday in 1780, the conversation must have been very enlivening. (ii) But there was something much more solid than wit in Mrs. Montagu's talk. Johnson said she displayed more mind in conversation than any person he had ever met with, "such powers of ratiocination, even radiations of intellectual excellence as are amazing". (iii) "Fertile-minded Montagu," was the description given her by Dr. Burney. (iv) Hannah More's first impression of her was that she had the "sprightly vivacity of fifteen with the judgment and experience of a Nestor." (v) Moreover she had a genuinely benevolent heart. Certainly Mrs. Montagu was most anxious to be known as a female Maecenas, but she had a real interest in the rising wits, whom she made her care, and her charities went far deeper than mere display, as Dr. Johnson, Dr. Beattie, Burke, and

(i) Thraliana, 453.

(ii) "Mrs. Montagu and I lived a vast deal together at Bath this Spring: we met and were pitted every night at one house or another: it came so that at last, that I observed to Fanny Burney, we might now say quite fairly: 'Satan! I know thy strength, and thou knowest mine.'" Thraliana, 443.

(iii) Boswell, Life, IV, 275.

(iv) Dr. Burney, The Morning Herald, March 12th 1782.

(v) Roberts, Memoirs, 153.

Garrick all realised. (i) Further, she had a most useful kind of unself-critical, complacent vanity, so that she never stopped to think what impression she might be giving to the outside world. The progress of her ambitions was never delayed by any chilling introspection or by any sneaping self-criticism. And with a disposition of the kind most useful for a hostess, Mrs. Montagu was also prodigiously wealthy. She could not only stagger her guests with the grandeur of her houses and delight them with the elegance of her furnishings, but she could also feast them with the rarest food and the choicest wines. In rooms designed by the first architects and decorated by the finest artists of the day, made lovelier still by beautiful flowers, burgundy and sense would flow freely together, wit and champagne would sparkle in company, and claret would be mingled with the stream of bon mots.

Here is a typical scene in one of her assemblies in the Chinese Room (ii) at Hill Street. The ladies are the most colourful part of the assembly. Some of the men's coats have brilliant buttons, gold or silver or jewelled, and one or two of them wear gay waistcoats, but the men's clothes are for

(i) To call her charity "amateur" as Mr. Zamick does (John Rylands Library Bulletin, xvi, 1932) seems to me to be judging Mrs. Montagu by social standards to which we have grown after the better part of two centuries.

(ii) It is interesting to remember that John Galsworthy's Fleur, a modern salon hostess and "lion" hunter had also a Chinese Room "with ivory panels, a copper floor, central heating and cut-glass lustres. It contained four pictures- all Chinese... The Fireplace, wide and open had Chinese dogs with Chinese tiles for them to stand on. The silk was chiefly of green jade.." A Modern Comedy, (1929), 30.

the most part sober in hue, snuff-coloured, or mouse-dun or marone, although here and there the exaggerated costume of a young macaroni⁽¹⁾ strikes the eye. Elegant ladies move gracefully in gowns of the richest silk materials, nipped at the waist, but falling in ample skirts over thickly padded hips and decked with long stomachers and delicate lace ruffles and kerchiefs. Some gowns are laced above the stomacher, some at the front, some at the back. Wits and lords, lawyers and doctors, beaux and belles, authors and critics, bishops and artists, tourists and travellers, ambassadors and other foreigners, throng the spacious reception room. On one corner Johnson is lamenting with Mrs. Carter the harm done by atheists in a Christian country. Young Hannah More, who has recently been introduced to London society, listens eagerly but scarcely wholeheartedly, as all this display of wealth and magnificence is new to her and just to be near "Dictionary" Johnson is a distracting experience. Besides, she is a little self-conscious about her new green-satin gown and her high "head", for she has been to the hairdresser's and her hair, like that of most of the other ladies present, is strained above cushions in the latest fashion.

(1) Macaronis were young fops who dressed most extravagantly. "One Macaroni appeared in the Assembly Rooms," says Turberville, "in a shot-silk coat, pink satin waistcoat, and breeches covered with silver net, white stockings with pink clocks, and pink satin shoes with large pearl buckles. His hair was dressed remarkably high and stuck full of pearl pins. Striped, spotted or chequered materials were preferred for the chief Macaroni garments, which included long coats like banjans (dressing-gowns) with pockets set low in the skirt." Johnson's England, 394.

Nearby, Mrs. Thrale, with her merry black eyes dancing, looking radiant in a new gold-coloured watersilk, trips out apt quotations and bandies witty comments with Soame Jenyns. And there is Mrs. Chapone in a dove-grey taffeta looking impressive but not beautiful, as she discusses marriage with Mr. William Weller Pepys, but most correctly and most properly. Sir Joshua Reynolds holds another little group of listeners- he is not yet very deaf- and the group includes the lovely Duchess of Devonshire, so often his model, in a jonquil-coloured lutestring, and winsome Mrs. Garrick in a pearly-grey satin, delicately embroidered with sprays of green and rose and silver. Here too, is David Garrick who has just come in and who, fearing a bear's hug, if Johnson catches sight of him, prudently stays at the far corner of the room. On a sofa are young Lady Louisa Stuart in billowing lavender and Miss Dorothy Gregory fresh as a rose in white. They are trying to make each other laugh by commenting on any oddities and mannerisms in the older guests. Occasionally some busy-body makes their self-control more difficult by drawing their attention to wise words that have just been spoken by some celebrity. (1) And threading the groups unweariedly is the slight, vivacious, but dignified figure of the hostess, her diamonds flashing, a ready word on her lips for every conversation. Here she makes a compliment, there she speaks a word of flattery, to this group

(1) "We were pulled by the sleeve - 'My dear, did you listen?' 'Did you mind?' 'Mrs. Montagu said,' 'Miss Hannah More observed!'" Lady Louisa Stuart describing the assemblies she attended in her young days. Gleanings, 67.

she can cite an apt Italian quotation, to another a verse of a French song. Nothing disturbs her social poise; in no way does she fail the most insignificant guest.

It was inevitable that in such a gathering there should be all sorts of flatterers and pretenders. With a Juvenalian pen, Lady Louisa Stuart has described such visitors. "She [Mrs. Montagu] was not unlikely to attract many of those flatterers by trade, vulgarly termed toad-eaters, who are apt to abound wherever the possession of power or wealth, or even the mere givers of good dinners, betray any relish for the commodity they deal in." "These were," she goes on, "dabblers in literature, literary coxcombs, male and female, who though not absolutely rejecting with scorn the beef and pudding, chiefly coveted her recommendation, the reflected lustre of her celebrity, and a repayment of praise proportioned in quantity and quality to the loads of it which they came to lay down. In a word she had toad-eaters from interest and toad-eaters from vanity - poor paltry insects both, and both often furnished with a concealed sting". (i) The presence of such creatures was scarcely Mrs. Montagu's fault. But she does seem to have had "ower grit an armfu' o' this warld." Her social position was inseparable from her wordly wealth. Many of her contemporaries felt that she was as proud of her coal-pits as of her literary successes. (ii) In theory, and as a true Blue-

(i) Gleanings, 66-7.

(ii) Lord Lyttelton teasingly called her "cinder-wench". Boswell, Malahide Papers, ix, 82.

stocking, she was against any extravagance in dress, but latterly she seems to have attracted attention by too brilliant a display of diamonds and too elaborate a "head". Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Delany were both rather scathing about this display. (i)

And with all her natural gifts and graces, by common consent Mrs. Montagu had one great lack as a hostess. She lacked the "art of kneading the mass well together" (ii) to use the words of Lady Louisa Stuart, who attended many of her assemblies. It is probable indeed that she was the least self-conscious person at her own assemblies. Each individual went out "feeling himself single, isolated, and...embarrassed with his own person". (iii) Sometimes, perhaps in an attempt to 'knead the mass together', Mrs. Montagu arranged her chairs in a circle, so that there was only one conversation going on at a time but, so placed, friends had little opportunity to greet each other. Mrs. Delany tells of a day when she found such a "formal formidable circle". "I had a whisper from Mrs. Boscawen", she wrote, "another with Lady Bute, and a wink from the Duchess of Portland—

(i) "Another Lady Mrs. Montagu whose accomplishments he Dr. Johnson never denied, came to our house one day covered with diamonds, feathers etc. and he did not seem inclined to chat with her as usual. I asked him why, when the company was gone. "Why, her head looked so like that of a woman who shews puppets.. and her voice so confirmed the fancy, that I could not bear her today; when she wears a large cap I can talk to her." Thrale, Anecdotes, 184-5; "I could not help calling to mind...Lady Clarendon's answer to Lady Granville when she asked her what was become of her jewels... 'They are in my cabinet. When my eyes outshone my diamonds I wore them; now they outshine my eyes, I lock them up,' and I thought if Mrs. Montagu's coronet of brilliants which crowned her toupet, had been in her cabinet, it would have been their proper place. It is wonderful that a mind so well stored should find a corner for so frippery a thing as vanity." Delany, Autobiography, iv, 498.

(ii) Stuart, Gleanings, 62. (iii) Ibid., Gleanings, 62.

poor diet for me who love a plentiful meal of social friendship.⁽ⁱ⁾ There is no doubt that on other occasions she tried to break the company up into little groups such as are described above; but even so, she did not have the knack of making her guests feel absolutely at ease— an accomplishment in which Mrs. Vesey and Mrs. Garrick seem to have excelled. Perhaps some of her guests were overawed by the presence of so many great ones. Others might have been overwhelmed by the magnificence of her mansion. Certain it is that something was lacking, the kind of warm spark that kindled all Mrs. Vesey's "pleasant Tuesday parties," so that her guests immediately abandoned themselves to the company and went home with a glow and a gladness in their hearts. Yet with a benevolent spirit, Mrs. Montagu brought together most of the choice spirits of her day. With great truthfulness she could write to Mrs. Vesey "We have lived much with the wisest, the best, the most celebrated man of our times, and with some of the best, most accomplished and most learned women of any time." (ii)

While pride of place as a Bluestocking hostess goes to Mrs. Montagu, pride of popularity certainly goes to Elizabeth Vesey, the "Bluestocking of Mayfair", (iii) the much tormented

(i) Autobiography, iv, 204 - 5.

(ii) Blunt, II, 7.

(iii) John Rylands Lib. Bulletin, xvi, 83.

wife of Agmondesham Vesey, M.P., (i) a member of Johnson's Club. I have not already dealt with her as an intellectual, because she was first and foremost a hostess. While she sympathised entirely with the Bluestocking outlook and formed her most congenial friends in the circle, she had neither the equipment of mind, nor the strength of will which characterised the other Bluestockings. (ii) Her letters were her only literary achievement, and queer, incoherent, unpunctuated documents they are. Her temperament was too mercurial, too volatile for serious application of mind. And yet she had indisputably a most rich endowment of social gifts and graces. She succeeded where the more able, more intellectual Elizabeth Montagu failed, for she had the power of putting her guests at ease as soon as they entered her drawing-room. The key to that success was

(i) It is strange that Vesey should have proved such a difficult husband, for Mary Hamilton tells us in her Diary that the Veseys, who were cousins, had been "attached to each other from their cradles," (Anson, 238) and that Mr. Vesey's patient appreciation had survived Elizabeth's first marriage to the aged Mr. Handcock. Vesey wrote an epitaph for their joint grave, which included the lines

"Who loved when young, yet died old friends

A blessing fate but seldom sends". (Anson, 238).

In the main she clung to him pathetically, but one year when he was philandering with "plump German ladies at Spa" (Blunt, 162), she allowed Sterne to carry on a sentimental flirtation with her at Scarborough, to the great distress of Eliza Carter. Both Mr. and Mrs. Vesey seem to have had restless temperaments, for in 1783, when they were both nearing seventy, Mrs. Montagu wrote of them disapprovingly, "The gentleman is past the age of choosing Valentines, the lady for going a-Maying". Edinburgh Review, October, 1825, 367.

(ii) She was however a genuine book-lover, as the catalogue of her library at Lucan indicates. See W.H. Robinson, The Library of Mrs. Elizabeth Vesey Newcastle, (1926), Book Catalogue 14.

probably a strange simplicity of nature that found an honest delight in other people's happiness. This was her chief concern as a hostess, the well-being of her guests. She herself made no pretensions to learning; she bade for rivalry with no one; but a whole host of her contemporaries testified to the pleasantness of the parties where she "mixed the rank and the literature".(i)

For more than thirty years , from the middle of the century, she entertained the best company in London and it was to her house in Bolton Row, Piccadilly, that the Turk's Head Club repaired "every other Tuesdays", having previously dined together.(ii) It was to Mrs. Vesey and not to "bright Montagu" (iii) that Hannah More addressed The Bas Bleu and there she indicated part of the secret of Mrs. Vesey's success, her hatred of ceremony and formality. Her dislike of the circle was well known. (iv) One day at Dr. Burney's, the guests deliberately sat back to back in mimicry of Mrs. Vesey's assemblies and to the bewilderment and subsequent entertainment

- (i) Burney, Diary, II, 123.
- (ii) Boswell, Life, III, 424, n 3.
- (iii) More, Poems, 1816.
- (iv) It was an easy target for the satirist: "Then they got into parties as suited them best, Each set by themselves turned their backs on the rest. To be sure such a gay people knew well what was right But I should have thought it not quite so polite". "A. Conversazione".. 1782. Charles Hoole, Modern Manners,

of late arrivals who continued the fun. Hannah More wrote:

"See Vesey's plastic genius make
A circle every figure take:
Nay shapes and forms which would defy
All science of geometry,
Isosceles and parallel
Names hard to speak, and hard to spell!" (i)

and continued to describe how, by a kind of secret alchemy, Mrs. Vesey managed to blend the most heterogeneous crowd into a harmonious whole. The appearance of the company would be very much the same as at Mrs. Montagu's, as a letter from Mrs. Montagu to Mrs. Vesey indicates. Mrs. Vesey's reception room at Bolton Row was appropriately decorated in blue. "Indeed, my dear friend," wrote Mrs. Montagu, "it is not possible to tell you how happy I am in the hope of a most delightful winter in your society, and in that blue room, where all people are enchanted, though the magic figure of the circle is vanished thence: a philosopher, a fine lady, and a gallant officer form a triangle in one corner; a Macaroni, a poet, a divine, a beauty and an Otaheite savage, a wondrous pentagon in another; then the coalition of parties, professions and characters which compose the group standing in the middle of the room; the flying squadrons of casual visitants that are ever coming in and going out! Great orators play a solo of declamation; wits let off epigrams like minute guns; the sage speaks sentences; every one does his best to please the Lady of the enchanting room,

" For all contend
To win her grace whom all commend". (ii)

(i) Poems, 1816, 75-6

(ii) Blunt, II, 58.

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There is evidence, however, that Mrs. Vesey sometimes did have a circle, for Mrs. Montagu wrote to her on another occasion "...my dear sylph makes her company form a round O and she sits in the centre and like the sun enlivens and illuminates the whole." (i) Perhaps this happened when Mrs. Vesey had something to communicate to the whole company, some piece of news, political or literary, or perhaps an anecdote or account of someone known to those present. On one occasion Pennington tells us, Mrs. Carter was ill and her doctor's bulletin was read to the assembled company by Dr. Johnson. "There was a profound silence, and the Doctor with the utmost gravity read aloud the physician's report of the happy effect which Mrs. Carter's medicines had produced with a full and complete account of the circumstances attending them". (ii)

Poor Mrs. Vesey grew progressively more deaf and at her later assemblies made rather a comic figure, as she dashed about breathlessly from group to group, girt about with numerous ear-trumpets, fearful to miss anything, and yet so restless that she always arrived just too late to get the point of an argument. She was notorious for her Irish bulls and her absent-mindedness. The anecdote most often retold about her concerns her denunciation of second marriages to a certain twice-married lady of rank. The lady protested that Mrs. Vesey

(i) Blunt, I, 263.

(ii) Memoirs, I, 467.

herself was in the same category. "Bless me, my dear! I had quite forgotten it,"⁽ⁱ⁾ was the artless reply. One day Lady Spencer, mother of the Duchess of Devonshire, brought to Mrs. Vesey's a collection of silver ears to serve instead of trumpets to assist deafness. With the utmost naïveté, Mrs. Vesey began trying them on, sublimely unaware of the ridiculous figure she made, and of her unintentionally comic remarks about her appearance. Fanny Burney had the utmost difficulty to control her laughter: "I was forced to begin filliping off the crumbs of the macaroon cake from my muff, for an excuse for looking down,"⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ she wrote.

The success of her assemblies does seem all the more remarkable when we discover that Mrs. Vesey was not merely absent-minded, but that she was somewhat mentally unstable. Many reports tell us the tale that Fanny Burney has so clearly told in the Memoirs of Dr. Burney: "With really lively parts, a fertile imagination and a pleasant quickness of remark, she had the unguardedness of childhood, joined to an Hibernian bewilderment of ideas that cast her incessantly into some burlesque situation and incited even the most partial, and even the most sensitive of her own countrymen, to relate stories, speeches, and anecdotes of her astonishing self-perplexities, her confusion about times and circumstances, and her inconceivable jumble of recollections between what had happened or what might have happened, and what had befallen others that

(i) Nathaniel Wraxall, Historical and Posthumous Memoirs 1772-1784, (1884), 104.

(ii) Diary, II, 231.

she imagined had befallen herself; that made her name, though it could never be pronounced without personal regard, be constantly coupled with something grotesque... Her ardour to know whatever was going forward at her parties, and to see whoever was named, kept her curiosity constantly in a panic and almost dangerously increased the singular wanderings of her imagination." (i) But it was something more serious than an Irish temperament that caused this restless instability. After her husband's death in 1785, poor Mrs. Vesey wept endlessly when alone, and indulged in the strangest fancies when visitors like Hannah More, Eliza Carter or Horace Walpole sat with her for hours to cheer her growing darkness. (ii) But the last word must be on Mrs. Vesey's success and popularity. Horace Walpole began by deriding the Vesey chaos, but like so many others who came to scoff, he kept on coming for the pure pleasure of the visit; and from the lips of all sorts of other great contemporaries, Mrs. Vesey won "golden opinions".

While Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Vesey were undoubtedly the sun and moon in the firmament of Bluestocking hostesses, there was quite a galaxy of stars, some of the first magnitude (to use a metaphor the ladies loved), who assembled "the rank and the literature" in their London houses. Mrs. Thrale assembled

(i) II, 265.

(ii) Horace Walpole wrote to Hannah More, Oct. 1785. "She [Mrs. Vesey] has not an acquaintance in town; and yet told me the town was very full and that she had had a good deal of company." Letters, xiv, 28.

companies very similar to those described at Mrs. Montagu's and Mrs. Vesey's; but, as has been already indicated, she was a London hostess only for a comparatively short time. (i) It is sufficient to say here that she was an ideal hostess on all occasions, not only combining in her nature the spice of wit with the glow of charity, but having also a considerable amount of Mrs. Vesey's unselfishness and a certain portion of the saving grace of self-criticism and moderation which Mrs. Montagu lacked. It is worth noticing, since mention has already been made of Mrs. Thrale's "infinite variety", that The Morning Herald (ii) singled out her literary parties for their "variety". Among the remaining hostesses, Mrs. Boscawen (iii) can be chosen as the one most generally in sympathy with the whole Bluestocking movement. Her name appears regularly in the list of guests given by the chroniclers of the assemblies. A charming raconteur, a pleasant letter-writer, she was also a delightful hostess at her house in South Audley Street, and at Rosedale, (iv) Richmond.

(i) During the period from the year of her first introduction to Mrs. Montagu (1775) to the year of her second marriage (1784).

(ii) 19th March, 1782.

(iii) She was the aristocratic wife of Admiral Boscawen already mentioned for his supposed naming of the assemblies "Bluestocking Clubs." He was significantly named Old Dreadnought for his never-failing courage. Although he died at the age of fifty, he is one of the great figures in the great history of the Royal Navy.

(iv) This house had previously belonged to the poet Thomson.

"Each art of conversation knowing
High-bred, elegant Boscawen" (i)

was Dr. Burney's apt description of her. It was she —
"good and dear Mrs. Boscawen"—(ii) who introduced Hannah More
to her close friend Mrs. Delany, that "living library of know-
ledge", (ii) and who persuaded Hannah to sit to Opie. (iii)
At Strawberry Hill, too, she was a welcome guest. One day
Horace Walpole and she watched a boat-race on the Thames from
his "blue bow-window" (iv), and sometimes she used to drop in
to "visit his gout". (v)

The names of Mrs. Walsingham and Mrs. Ord occur very
persistently as the names of Bluestocking hostesses. Mrs.
Walsingham, however, deliberately kept her circle aristocratic.
Indeed Fanny Burney tells us Mrs. Walsingham had the reputation
of being civil only to people of "birth, fame, or wealth" (vi)
and there are repeated contemporary references to the splen-
dour of her house in Stratford Place, to the magnificence of
her dinners and to the fashion parade to be seen at her
entertainments. She was an accomplished woman, for she was
not only a painter of some merit, but also a musician and a
singer. Mary Hamilton described her playing Handel on the
organ in her beautiful riverside house at Thames-Ditton, and

- (i) The Morning Herald 12th March, 1782. (ii) Roberts Memirs
I, 92.
(iii) Ibid., II, 34-7. (iv) Walpole, Letters, xiv, 263.
(v) Ibid., xiv, 262, 275. (vi) Diary, II, 145.

Mrs. Delany described an assembly at her house in Stratford Place where there were "catches and glees". (i) Peter Pindar satirised her as a "petticoat Apollo" in his "Ode upon Ode."

"A dame who dances, paints and plays and sings:
The Saint Cecilia - Queen of wind and strings!
Though scarcely bigger than a cat - a dame
Midst the Bas Bleus, a giant as to fame". (ii)

She was more interested in music and had more knowledge of it than the major Bluestockings, (iii) but for all her wealth and acquirements, there are indications that she was not popular. Perhaps she aroused jealousy. Certainly she herself was critical and censorious of others. (iv) On the other hand at Mrs. Ord's house was to be found "everything delectable in the blue way". (v) And she was singled out for her ease as a hostess and for her power of "mixing the ingredients" of her assemblies well. (vi)

(i) Delany, Autobiography, v, 218. (ii) Works, 1794, Vol. I, 410.

(iii) Pindar laughed at her musical pretensions.

"Reader, at this great lady's Sunday meeting,
Midst tuning instruments each other greeting,
Screaming as if they had not met for years
So joyous and so great their clatter! - say
Didst ever see this lady striking A

Upon her harpsichord with bending ears?
With open mouth and stare profound

Attention nailed and head awry...?
Thou never didst? - then friend without a hum
I envy thee a happiness to come."

Ibid., 415-6.

(iv) "Mrs. Walsingham must be admired for her talents and if she made more allowances for those who had not so strong a mind as herself, she would be more loved. She is keen and sometimes severe and wants a certain softness, without which no female can appear truly amiable". Anson, Hamilton, 218.

(v) Roberts, Memoirs, I, 317.

(vi) Burney, Early Diary, II, 137-8.

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She was a good friend to Fanny Burney. It was arranged that Fanny should meet Soame Jenyns at one of her assemblies. To Fanny's horror, the occasion turned out to be a formal appreciation of Cecilia. Jenyns dressed "in a court suit of apricot-coloured silk lined with white satin" (1) gave a long harangue and covered the authoress with confusion. But Mrs. Ord, too, like Mrs. Walsingham, seems to have marred many excellent qualities by one defect, a censorious spirit. Although Fanny Burney appreciated her persistent kindness (ii) to her, she could not help regretting Mrs. Ord's sharply critical nature. "She thinks the worst and judges the most severely of all mankind, of any person I have ever known; it is the standing imperfection of her character, and so ungenial, so nipping, so blighting, it sometimes damps all my pleasure in her society, since my living with her has shown the extent of her want of all charity towards her fellows." (iii)

At the house of her mother Lady Galway, Miss Monckton (later Countess of Cork and Orrery) could provide "the finest bit of blue". (iv) She had Mrs. Vesey's flair for arranging assemblies and the social connections necessary for "mixing the rank and the literature". Fanny Burney writes:- Miss Monckton is between thirty and forty, very short, very fat, but

(1) Burney, Memoirs, 1832, II, 289.

(ii) It was Mrs. Ord's coach that took Fanny to court; it was partly her exertions that achieved ~~her~~ release when her health was giving way under the strain and it was she who took her on a holiday immediately afterwards.

(iii) Burney, Diary, v, 30

(iv) Boswell, Life, iv, 108-9.

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handsome; splendidly and fantastically dressed, rouges not unbecomingly, yet evidently and palpably desirous of gaining notice and admiration. She has an easy levity in her air, manner, voice, and discourse, that speak all within to be comfortable; and her rage of seeing anything curious may be satisfied if she pleases by looking in a mirror." (i) The world of elegance and fashion was much in evidence at Miss Monckton's, and she was an entertaining hostess. Dr. Johnson found it easy to be frivolous in her company. "Her vivacity enchanted the sage, and they used to talk together with all imaginable ease," (ii) Boswell tells us, and he himself seems to have found more of a kindred spirit in her than in the other Bluestocking ladies. He visited regularly at her house when he was in London in the early seventeen-eighties. On 6th May, 1781, he recorded in his journal that he found her charming and more suo hastened to tell her so: "I said she was not blue but white." (iii) On 18th May, 1783, however, after a good dinner with "burgundy, champagne, and a deal of excellent claret", (iv) he prudently decided not to go to Miss Monckton's. There is a hint of the kind of person she was in her invitations. These she used to send out on "most perfumed" French notepaper, "gilt-bordered, glazed, enclosed in a finely decorated cover and sealed with a minikin figure". (v) Such invitations suggest a frivolity and a vanity not quite

(i) Diary, ii, 123-4

(ii) Boswell, Life, iv, 109.

(iii) Malahide Papers, xiv, 217. (iv) Ibid., xv, 228.

(v) Burney Diary, ii, 130.

in harmony with the Bluestocking spirit. Fanny Burney confessed she was accepting this particular invitation rather to see some people whom she wished to meet than to see Miss Monckton. (i) Later she describes the assembly in great detail. (ii) The behaviour of Miss Monckton and her mother Lady Galway was most peculiar. They did not receive their guests on arrival, nor, although the hall was full of servants, did anyone show them upstairs. Mrs. Thrale, Miss Thrale, and Fanny who arrived together were baffled as to what to do. After arguing and hesitating, they made their own way upstairs. Even when Miss Monckton saw her guests, she did not rise to greet them. (iii). But Fanny admitted a certain charm in her hostess-ship.

Four other titled ladies who acted as hostesses at Bluestocking assemblies were, Lady Herries, niece of Sir Horace Mann, Lady Lucan whose vivacity was "prodigious" (iv) and at whose house Walpole tried to foment the Johnson-Montagu

(i) Burney Diary, ii, 130-1.

(ii) Ibid., ii, 132-4.

(iii) The behaviour of her mother was still more odd. She sat by the fire and received nobody. "She...was dressed with a little round white cap, and not a single hair, no cushion roll, not anything else but the little round cap, which was flat upon her forehead." Diary, ii, 133. During the evening she "trotted from her corner...and leaning her hands upon the backs of two chairs put her little round head through two fine high-dressed ladies on purpose to peep at me, and then trotted back to her place! Ha, Ha!" Diary, ii, 142.

(iv) Walpole, Letters, x, 410.

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quarrel over Lord Lyttelton, (i) "dainty" (ii) and sociable Lady Rothes, wife of the doctor, Sir Lucas Pepys, some of whose assemblies were too crowded and fashionable and Cowper's cousin, Lady Hesketh. Among others still were the witty, vivacious and loquacious Mrs. Cholmondeley, (iii) sister of Peg Woffington, lovable Mrs. Garrick, who entertained "blue" parties frequently at the Adelphi after her husband's death (iv) and pretty Mrs. Hunter of Leicester Square, authoress of the words of Hadyn's song, "My mother bids me bind my hair."

One of the most remarkable features of these assemblies was the width of the circle touched by them. There are few great names in the second half of the eighteenth century not

(i) Mrs. Montagu and other friends of Lyttelton were displeased with Dr. Johnson's treatment of him in the Prefaces, Biographical and Critical to the most eminent of the English Poets. Horace Walpole writes Jan. 1781, "Montagu and all her Maenades intended to tear Johnson limb from limb, for despising their moppet, Lord Lyttelton." (Letters, xi, 376.) And again in February, he tells how at Lady Lucan's, Mrs. Montagu and Johnson set up "altar against altar" at different ends of the room. "There she told me as a mark of her high displeasure that she would never ask him to dinner again. I took her side and fomented the quarrel..." (Letters, xi, 409-10). But the trouble came to a head one day in June at Mrs. Thrale's, when Johnson challenged Pepys to state his objections. There was no spoken row with Mrs. Montagu and she continued to give Mrs. Williams a yearly pension till her death in 1783. (Burney, Diary, I, 547-9).

(ii) Ibid., I 460.

(iii) She married Walpole's nephew but he lamented his nephew's marriage to a player's sister. Letters, ii, 254-5. Already mentioned as the first Bluestocking to appreciate the merits of Evelina.

((iv) Everyone loved Mrs. Garrick. Mary Hamilton said it was impossible to be in her company for half an hour without loving her. Anson, 220.

mentioned as attending one or more of them, (i) and it has been indicated that many great men were closely connected with them. Witness alone the regular attendance of the members of Johnson's Club at Mrs. Vesey's Tuesday parties. Men of letters and lawyers, artists and doctors, wits and noblemen, bishops and actors, politicians and fine gentlemen met on equal terms with ladies of rank and intellect. Only in the courts of Kings and Queens had such brilliant companies been assembled in previous centuries in England and then not for intellectual exchange. But it is neither the brilliance of the Blue-stocking assemblies, nor their universality, nor even their high moral tone, which is of lasting significance. Our debt to the Bluestocking hostesses is that they "stood for the principle that women ought to be liberally educated and that they had a right of entry into the intellectual world, that they were not mere ornaments for the drawing-room and ball room, intended only for men's diversion, but fit to converse on an equality with them, to talk as Johnson and Reynolds understood talking, not merely the tittle-tattle of the tea table". (ii)

(i) Fielding and Chesterfield however, are outstanding names one does not meet in assembly lists.

(ii) A. S. Turberville, Eng. Men and Manners in the Eighteenth Century, 110.

THE BLUE-STOCKING ASSEMBLIES AND
THE CONTEMPORARY FRENCH SALONS.

"La vie de salon, celle des salons littéraires, en particulier, est un phénomène purement français, dû, probablement, à cet esprit de sociabilité et à cet amour de la conversation qui apparaissent comme des éléments typiques du caractère nationale" —

"Au dix-huitième siècle, les salons littéraires de la France, ...deviennent une véritable institution sociale, non seulement pour ce pays, mais pour l'Europe entière, qui vient y chercher un complément de culture, tout en y versant l'apport de ses dons et de ses éléments propres."

Roger Picard, Les Salons Littéraires et La Société Française, (1943), 19 and 352.

In studying the eighteenth-century Bluestocking assemblies, it is fascinating and profitable to cross the Channel and to look into the contemporary Parisian salons. In the Rue Saint Honoré, in beautiful apartments Mme. de Geoffrin, tyrannised benevolently over her little senate, which included everyone who mattered in the France of the day in literature, in art, in science, in diplomacy. In the Couvent des Filles Saint-Joseph the restless, animated but blind Mme. du Deffand received most of the great writers of her day and some of the most attractive women of Paris in a salon richly hung with buttercup silk moire. In the Rue Saint-Dominique Mlle. de Lespinasse reigned in a salon where the woodwork was white and the curtains crimson. In her fellow-countrymen's appreciation of her, her attraction was consistently called "sa flamme." And at that flame, not only distinguished Frenchmen, but many distinguished Europeans, Englishmen, Italians, Spaniards as well warmed both hands.

Superficially, and superficially only, can the French and the English salons be compared. In one sense, it is hardly fair to compare them at all because the salon in France might almost be called a national institution. The salon is, in fact, a manifestation of the genius of the French race. The English genius is quite different. All that one can say is that in both countries, in the eighteenth century, ladies with considerable personality received at their houses men of

letters, artists, philosophers, politicians, and encouraged among them the art of conversation. There the comparison should end, although one could go on to note minor and superficial parallels. For example, parallels are quickly found for Mrs. Montagu's architectural and artistic preoccupations. The Frenchwomen's love of Paris - they seldom left it and were always homesick away from it - has its counterpart in the Englishwomen's love of London (i) Mrs. Vesey's warm-heartedness could be compared with the "richesse de coeur" (ii) of Mlle. de L'Espinasse. Loyalty and benevolence to their friends are qualities quickly matched in Mrs. Montagu, and Mme. de Geoffrin. But such comparisons, however interesting, are rather profitless because they are personal. It is the difference in the character, function, and atmosphere of the French and the English salons, which is significant. How, then, did these two parallel movements differ? The eighteenth-century salons were no new thing in France. They drew their inspiration from previous salons and most of all from the mother of all salons, that of Madame la Comtesse de Rambouillet, which flourished between 1612 and 1665 (the date of Madame de Rambouillet's death), and was at the height of its fame between 1624 and 1648. The seventeenth-century

(i) It has been pointed out by many critics, beginning with Nathaniel Wraxall that London was not the intellectual capital of England, as Paris was of France, but that is only a contributory, not a main reason for the greater achievements of the French salons.

(ii) M. Glotz and M. Maire, Salons Du Dix-Huitième Siècle, (1945), Intro., 16.

salon had a strong influence on French culture, and yet it was not at all a consciously cultural movement. The French salon of the seventeenth century was a natural consequence of the development of French society. Therein lay the secret of its success. It is true that Madame de Rambouillet had deliberately left the court of King Henry because of its grossness, and that her salon was distinguished for its courtesy and politeness; but what it achieved it achieved not by any rigid laws but by grace and therefore without any effort or strain. This secret was communicated to the later French salons. In England, on the other hand the Bluestocking assemblies were definitely organised with the purpose of regenerating society and in particular, with the purpose of giving women more intelligent interests. That more conscious purpose, laudable and salutary as it was in eighteenth-century England, made the English salons less naturally graceful than those of France. Again, Frenchwomen from the first showed their genius, their natural ability to rule men and yet to remain feminine, to be masterful and yet to remain desirable. The very flower of the genius of Frenchwomen blossomed in the mistresses of the salons. Frenchwomen have by nature an extraordinary savoir-vivre, an equally extraordinary savoir-faire. This was the magnet that drew towards it writers and artists, philosophers, scientists, and men of the world. This was the wine of life that intoxicated the choicest spirits of successive ages. Instinctively they

knew, Mme. de Rambouillet and all her successors, that if they would retain their influence over men they must not obtrude their own intellectual achievements. They must fascinate with their ready wit, their unfailing flow of animated conversation, but above all they must stimulate those about them to wit and to a freedom of self-expression. The true function of the maîtresse de maison was not so much to shine herself as to let others shine, to let every guest be at once an actor and a spectator, or to use the metaphor Marmontel used of Mlle. de Lespinasse, to tune her guests perfectly so that the music of the salon would be in perfect harmony. (1) Instinctively they knew that education in the formal sense mattered little. That fact was brilliantly demonstrated by Mme. de Geoffrin, the mistress of the most complete, best organised, and best administered salon of her day. In writing of the grandmother who brought her up, she puts her finger on the reason for the success of French women as salon hostesses. The grandmother had very little education, but "son esprit était si éclairé, si adroit, si actif, qu'il ne l'abandonnait jamais; il était toujours à la place du savoir. Elle parlait si agréablement des choses qu'elle ne savait pas, que personne ne désirait qu'elle les sût mieux; et quand son ignorance était trop visible, elle s'en tirait par des plaisanteries qui déconcertaient les pédants qui avait voulu l'humilier. Elle était si content

(1) Quoted Glötz and Maire, 226.

de son lot, qu'elle regardait le savoir comme une chose très inutile pour une femme. Elle disait.. 'Si ma petite-fille est une bête, le savoir la rendrait confiante et insupportable; si elle a de l'esprit et de la sensibilité, elle fera comme moi, elle suppléera par adresse et avec du sentiment à ce qu'elle ne saura pas; et quand elle sera plus raisonnable, elle apprendra ce à quoi elle aura plus d'aptitude, et elle l'apprendra bien vite.' Elle ne m'a donc fait apprendre, dans mon enfance, simplement qu'à lire; mais elle me faisait beaucoup lire: elle m'apprenait à penser en me faisant raisonner; elle m'apprenait à connaître les hommes en me faisant dire ce que j'en pensais, et en me disant aussi le jugement qu'elle portait. Elle m'obligeait à lui rendre compte de tous mes mouvements et de tous mes sentiments, et elle les rectifiait avec tant de douceur et de grâce que je ne lui ai jamais rien caché de ce que je pensais et sentais: mon intérieur lui était aussi visible que mon extérieur. Mon éducation était continuelle." (1)

Mme. de Geoffrin actually called herself an unlettered woman and a recent writer tells us "son orthographe resta toujours un peu personnelle." (11) Those of the great maîtresses de maison who had education, Mlle. de Lespinasse for example, by no means owed their success as hostesses to it.

How different were the Englishwomen, so consciously attempting to take their place in conversation on an equal

(1) Quoted Sainte-Beuve, Causeries Du Lundi, (1850), 11, 312.

(11) Roger Picard, Les Salons Littéraires et la Société Française, (1943), 202.

footing with men! Less subtle by nature, they were comparatively too blunt, too assertive to achieve the grace, the mastery of their French contemporaries. Again the Hôtel de Rambouillet was "the glass of fashion and the mould of form" for the seventeenth-century France. As the guests entered the Hotel, we are told, "Capes, pourpoints et rabats masculins, rivalisaient avec les corsages, les coiffes et les collerettes de femmes; les deux sexes portaient des bijoux et si l'un se paraît d'épees aux pommeaux orfévres, l'autre luttait contre cet avantage en s'arrogeant le privilège des éventails, des aumonières et de mille ornements précieux." (1) That spirit of fashion in dress continued to enliven all the French salons. True, lovely dresses were to be seen at Mrs. Montagu's in Hill Street and Portman Square, at Mrs. Walsingham's in Stratford Place and at Mrs. Vesey's in Bolton Row and Clarges Street. But as its name indicates, the Bluestocking Movement affected to disregard the importance of dress. Woollen stockings. Death to romance and grace. Again, the Frenchwomen showed their genius as hostesses in their wonderful dinners and suppers. In particular Mme. de Geoffrin was famous for her choice foods and wines. There were certain specialties at her table: fattened poulets from Caen, orange marmalade from the Abbey at Poissy. Mme. du Deffand's dinners were also famous. Now Mrs. Thrale and Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Garrick

(1) Picard, 32.

gave fine dinners; but originally the English assemblies, as Hannah More indicated in a passage already quoted, determined to dispense with elaborate entertainment. The refreshments at the typical assembly were lemonade and biscuits. But in France, "c'est autour de ces tables élégantes, dans la douce joie que donnent un cadre harmonieux et une atmosphère amicale, sous le stimulant léger d'une chère soignée et de vins opportuns, que s'exprimaient les pensées les plus justes, les jugements les plus nuancés et que l'esprit sous toutes ses formes, se donnait cours le plus librement".(i) The elegance of the fashions, the excellence of the food are indicative of a very important difference between the English and French assemblies. The French salons were consistently more worldly than the English salons. In a worldly society fashion matters always, and food not less, whereas often morality does not. "Il n'a jamais été de bonne compagnie de se montrer sévère sur les mœurs privées." (ii) In England the moral and religious standards of the assemblies certainly kept away one or two of the cleverest spirits of the day. Chesterfield and Hume, outstanding absentees from the English assemblies, were warmly welcomed in the salons of France.(iii) It is true that Hume

(i) Picard, 218. (ii) Glutz and Maire, 15.

(iii) Mme. Necker who was a fervent Protestant and who was also mistress of an eighteenth century French salon, less brilliant than those mentioned, was in several ways more like the English ladies, in her dogmatic expression of her religious opinions. It is noteworthy that her father was Swiss. At her Friday salons, there were always two tables, one for believers, one for sceptics.

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was not resident in London at the time, but had he been attracted, he could have been at least as frequent a guest as Beattie.

The Frenchwomen too were more systematic as salon hostesses. It is not an exaggeration to say that their personal liberty was sacrificed to the success of their salons. Mme. de Geoffrin and Mme. du Deffand held their salons regularly two or three times a week and Mlle. de Lespinasse held her salon every evening from five to nine o'clock. She was seldom at the theatre and hardly ever in the country. The self-imposed duties of the French salon hostess were most exacting and required much discipline. The guests too were expected to attend regularly, for a French salon in the eighteenth century was "une petite cour présidée par une dame... Elle, tient son sceptre comme il lui plaît. Elle peut faire régner une stricte discipline, subjuguier par son charme, semer la terreur à coups de remarques caustiques, témoigner à ses familiers l'affectueuse et tyrannique sollicitude d'une mère. En pénétrant chez elle, on prend l'engagement tacite de s'incliner devant la loi du pays et de se laisser de bon gré diriger, morigener ou charmer".(1) Of the English Bluestocking assemblies, Mrs. Vesey's Tuesday parties are the most regular ones we hear of. Mrs. Walsingham's musical parties were generally on a Sunday evening. But the hostesses did not bind themselves, as a rule, to regular meetings, and they only received in the London season from November to April or May. Mrs. Montagu said she was of "the same opinion in

(1) Glötz and Maire, 14.

regard to assemblies that is held concerning oysters, that (i)
they are never good in a month that has not the letter R in it."
While there was a nucleus of regular attenders, the guests felt
no obligation to be present and the personnel shifted and
varied.

The French people, too, have a natural talent for conver-
sation. To them it is something far deeper than a mere
intellectual or aesthetic pleasure. "La conversation n'est
pas pour les Français un moyen de se communiquer ses idées,
ses sentiments, ses affaires, mais c'est un instrument dont
on aime à jouer et qui ranime ses esprits, comme la musique (ii)
chez quelques peuples et les liqueurs fortes chez quelques autres"
Finally, the Frenchman gets the same kind of happiness from
a salon as the Englishman from his club.

In thus explaining the reasons for the superiority and
success of the French salons I am not by any means regretting
or slighting the achievements of the Bluestocking assemblies.
They achieved what they set out to achieve. Their achievement
was local, although their influence was not so confined. The
salons in France have had a national significance: "L'étude
des salons littéraires...touche à tout ce qu'il y a de plus
sérieux dans l'histoire de la société et de celle de l'esprit
public en France. On pourrait aisément y faire entre l'exposé
d'une histoire de notre littérature, la description extérieure

(i) Blunt, ii, 68.

(ii) Glötz and Maire, 57.

des grandes époques de notre vie morale ou philosophique, la biographie sommaire de nos grands poètes...de nos gens de Cour, d'Eglise, ou de robe et faire des salons le centre d'une grande esquisse historique de la civilisation française." ⁽¹⁾ e

Useful as the English assemblies were in their day, important as their influence was, it would be fantastic to ascribe to them influence to such a degree.

THE LITERARY ACHIEVEMENT OF THE BLUESTOCKINGS.

"In the letters of Balzac to Mr. Chapelain, are the following words: 'I could more willingly tolerate a woman with a beard, than one that pretends to learning ... I would condemn all those women to the distaff, that undertook to write books'."

Letter from Lady Bradshaigh to Richardson.
Richardson, Correspondence, ed. Barbauld, VI, 96.

"Ye ladies, too, draw forth your pen,
I pray where can the hurt lie?
Since you have brains as well as men,
As witness Lady Wortley".

Pope, Sandys' Ghost, Poetical Works, Globe Edition
(1930), 474.

The greatest achievement of the Bluestockings was their destruction of the prejudice that serious literary studies were unbecoming to a woman. Their literary achievement was not negligible, but however great that was, it could scarcely have been of greater historical importance than the fact that they established women's right to pursue literature and to contribute to it as well as to criticise it. The light once lit by the Bluestockings has shone and continues to shine on the path of every woman who has written since their day. Yet much of their output is, if not quite unreadable, uninteresting except to the student. No one but a student of the drama or of Hannah More herself, would now think of reading her early writings, even though her drama Percy had a most successful contemporary run of twenty-one nights. Most of the Bluestockings tried to write poetry but with very little success. Mrs. Carter's poems are the best, but although they are technically accurate and were much appreciated by her contemporaries they make rather ponderous reading nowadays. Her piety was much more remarkable than her poetry and while her poetic descriptions of nature show a genuine appreciation, they are always a mere background for the more important moral. "The mere description of natural objects," was to her as to many of the poets of the Pope school, "silly unless tacked to a moral". (1) The "restless fluctuating deep"

(1) L. Stephen, English Literature and Society in the xviii th Century, (1903), 128.

is "Expressive of the human mind"; (i) and in describing a thunderstorm at midnight, she was moved to think that

"The same unchanging mercy rules
When flaming ether glows
As when it tunes the linnet's voice
Or blushes in the rose." (ii)

Most of the poems are elegiac in mood, in the fashion of the day. To use Mrs. Carter's own not very happy phrase, she 'consociates with her sister-worms'. (iii) Many of the poems seem to echo familiar passages in Gray:

"To death is destined all we seek below,
Except what virtue fixes for our own:
While the vain flourish of external show
Ends in the blazoned hearse, and sculptured stone." (iv)

But unlike Gray, Mrs. Carter always emerges from the "vaults of death" to the "orient beam" (v) of a "bright eternal day" (vi) Richardson inserted Mrs. Carter's Ode to Wisdom in Clarissa, not knowing who the author was. She sent him a "twinkation" (vii) (i.e. a scolding letter) about it and he apologised handsomely, sending her two volumes of his yet unfinished novel. Miss Talbot wrote an amusing letter telling of the surprise in the Secker household when Mrs. Carter's "owl" (viii) flew out of Clarissa. The poem is characteristic: correct, lofty in

(i) Memoirs, II, 42. (ii) Ibid., II, 55. (iii) Ibid., II, 33.

(iv) Ibid., 116. (v) Ibid., 39.

(vi) Ibid., 35. It was after noting this difference between Gray's poetry and Mrs. Carter's that I found a relevant comment on Gray's well-known stanza from the Elegy beginning "Full many a gem of purest ray serene", in one of Miss Talbot's letters to her. "And these human gems shall all hereafter be united, and admired in one glorious blaze- these flowers that grew and faded separate here, shall be bound up in one garland, and mingle their kindred sweets". Carter-Talbot Corres., I, 353.

(vii) Carter to Talbot Corres., I, 207. See also Carter Memoirs, 100-103 n.

(viii) The poem begins with a 'moping owl' leaving its moping. Carter-Talbot Corres. I, 203.

sentiment, but lacking in inspiration.

Mrs. Carter, Miss Talbot and Miss Mulso (afterwards Mrs. Chapone) were contributors to The Rambler and to The Gentleman's Magazine. A good and typical example of these contributions is the most original and spirited essay written by Miss Talbot when she was sixteen, entitled A Letter to a New-Born Child, the tone of which will be gathered from the following extracts: "You are heartily welcome, my dear little cousin, into this unquiet world: long may you continue in it, in all the happiness it can give...You are at present my dear, in a very philosophical condition: the gaieties and follies of life have no attraction for you...You have as yet contracted no partialities, are entirely ignorant of party distinctions, and look with a perfect indifference on all human splendour...I do not expect you, my dear, to answer this letter yet awhile, but as, I dare say, you have the greatest interest with your papa, will beg you to prevail on him, that we may know by a line, that you and your mama are well." (i) Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Thrale, both wrote dramatic dialogues. The former's Dialogues of the Dead (1760) published in Lyttelton's book with that title are a bridge between The Spectator essays and Fanny Burney's Evelina, for they have the satirical, didactic vein of the essays and they anticipate Fanny's character-mongering. Mrs. Thrale's Three Dialogues on the Death of Hester Lynch Thrale (1779), have considerable

(i) The Gentleman's Magazine, February, 1770, 76.

merit as character sketches of real people, Johnson and Mrs. Montagu among them.

Two other works are of note here, one for its great scholarly achievement in a special branch of literary activity—translation; the other for its historical importance. Catherine Talbot was warmly supported by Bishop Secker when she suggested to Mrs. Carter that she undertake a translation of Epictetus. This Mrs. Carter did between 1749 and 1756. At the same time, apart from her domestic duties at Deal, Mrs. Carter was in sole charge of the education of her youngest step-brother, Henry, whom she tutored till he entered Cambridge in 1756, so that the time she could give to Epictetus was limited. Secker, then Bishop of Oxford, gave helpful advice about the nature of the translation—Mrs. Carter's first attempts were too flowery—and he also revised her work. Both the Bishop and Miss Talbot were nervous about the possible evil effects of the spread of the heathen philosophy and although Mrs. Carter showed not only a more enlightened outlook, but also considerable strength of mind and independence of judgment in resisting their fears, she agreed to write notes indicating the superiority of Christian doctrine to Stoic philosophy. Austin Dobson, generally a most reliable authority on the eighteenth century, tells us that Mrs. Carter's translation has been superseded by the labours of Long and later scholars.(1)

(1) "The Learned Mrs. Carter", Later Essays, (1921), 109 n.

However that may be, her work has endured. What joy the most modest and accomplished Bluestocking would have had could she have looked into the seeds of time and seen her Epictetus (1758), bound in the two neat volumes of the Temple Classics Library (1899), or in the serviceable volume of the Everyman Library (1910). These modern editions which include her business-like introduction, notes and glossary are a sufficient testimony to the soundness of her scholarship. In Mrs. Carter's own day hers was the first complete translation of Epictetus to be done into English. It ran into four editions, and Dr. Secker, by this time Archbishop of Canterbury, whimsically complained that while his own invaluable sermons were selling at half-price, later editions of Epictetus fetched nearly as much as the original subscription. Mrs. Carter's fame travelled as far as Russia. In 1759, there was an article on her in the Russian journal Sotschinenie. (1)

It is scarcely fantastic to see Elizabeth Carter as the spiritual ancestor of Miss Dorothy Sayers who thumbed out a Greek Testament while writing The Man Born to Be King. Similarly one sees Mrs. Virginia Woolf and Miss Rose Macaulay as the descendants of the first serious woman literary critic in England, for such was Mrs. Montagu when she attempted her vindication of the English dramatist in her Essay on Shakespeare (1769). Johnson thought little of it and indeed the success of the essay was far beyond its merits. Garrick

(1) Memoirs, II, 417, ff.

Beattie, Lyttelton, Kaimes, Cowper, Emerson (the mathematician), Grenville (the Prime Minister) all praised it highly. Reynolds bet Burke that it was written by Thomas Warton. At Winchester College, Dr. Joseph Warton, then headmaster, made all the "great boys" read it. (i) It ran into six editions in England, the last being published in 1810, and it was translated into German, French and Italian, an Italian edition being published in Florence as late as 1840. Here and there Mrs. Montagu strikes out a happy sentence as, for example, the concluding sentence of the Introduction: "Nature and sentiment will pronounce our Shakespeare a mighty genius: judgment and taste will confess that as a writer he is far from being faultless." Or, to take another example, there is the sentence exposing the folly of faith in mere rules: "The pedant who bought at a great price the lamp of a famous philosopher, expecting that by its assistance his lucubrations would become equally celebrated, was little more absurd than those poets who suppose their dramas must be excellent if they are regulated by Aristotle's clock." (ii) But the Essay is hardly to be considered seriously as a work of criticism now, for however good were Mrs. Montagu's intentions, Johnson had already vindicated Shakespeare once and for all time. Moreover Mrs. Montagu's matter was neither new nor valuable, nor was she scholar enough to deal justly with Corneille and Racine. And her motives were mixed: she was as intent on attacking Voltaire as a member of Satan's household, as on championing Shakespeare. It is worth remembering

(i) Blunt, II, 32. (ii) Essay on Shakespeare, (1777), 5-6.

however, that a modern French critic who made a thorough study of the essay's historical importance concludes, "There is no doubt that she opened the eyes of the French critics to Voltaire's shortcomings as an English scholar, and that Shakespeare's cause profited by his adversary's partial loss of credit". (1) And it is worth repeating that this would-be Shakespearean critic was a woman.

When one comes to that part of the Bluestockings' literary legacy which has stood the best test of all, the test of time, one is struck by the fact that the survivors are of the kind of literature in which one would expect women to excel and in which women have since continued to excel. One must be honest and say that nothing they wrote barring Fanny Burney's Diary can be classed as great of its kind; but when one remembers that women as a sex were only beginning to fumble with a pen, one is impressed by the quality of what they did achieve. These works now to be discussed have, then, stood the test of time, and are all eminently readable and, of their kind, good. They fall into four groups: letters; diaries and journals; a biographical work; a novel.

The Bluestocking letters deserve a more comprehensive anthology than has yet been attempted; but it would be a stout heart that would undertake the labour, for the ladies were all extraordinarily "corresponding". When Miss Climenson undertook the task of editing Mrs. Montagu's letters, she was

(1) Huchon, Mrs. Montagu, 161. Huchon devotes 125 pages to discussing the Essay.

confronted with sixty-eight cases of MSS each containing a hundred to a hundred and fifty letters. (i) Nor was that collection complete. In addition there are at least the letters to Mrs. Thrale, to James Beattie, and to Lord Kaimes. (ii) And most of the ladies seem to have had almost as facile pens as Mrs. Montagu. It is perhaps not irrelevant to say again that in this they were typical of their century; for although a letter written in haste may be a gem, in general the best letters are written when there are no harassing demands on one's time, and life was leisurely in the eighteenth century. If proof is needed for that statement one has only to contemplate the leisurely lives of Cowper and Fitzgerald, of Gray and Walpole. Life had to be spacious for the Bluestockings. "A small house, tight stays, and strait shoes are plagues worthy to be published in the Litany of Worldly Things", said Mrs. Montagu. (iii) There was in fact, as Professor Saintsbury has said, "a pre-established harmony between the eighteenth century and letter-writing". (iv) Circumstances then were favourable to the Bluestockings. In so far as they were letter-writers they had the advantage of their sex. Why that is so is not my immediate concern, but there is fairly general agreement that ladies given the opportunities are better letter-writers than men.

(i) Elizabeth Montagu, Preface, vii.

(ii) In the John Rylands Library, Manchester, the Library of Marischal College, Aberdeen and the Register House, Edinburgh, respectively.

(iii) Blunt, II, 81.

(iv) A Letter Book, Intro, 24.

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In the correspondence of the good letter-writer there is the implicit conviction that letters can never be a satisfactory substitute for conversation, and at the same time, the good letter-writer is the person who in spite of that fact, manages to convey himself. "When I read your letters" wrote Cowper to Lady Hesketh, "I hear you talk, and I love talking letters dearly, especially from you. Well! the middle of June will not always be a thousand years off, and when it comes I shall hear you and see you too, and shall not care a farthing then, if you do not touch a pen in a month." (i) Now the Bluestockings in general had this power of communicating themselves in their letters and at the same time this feeling that letters are a poor substitute for meeting en chair et en os. Throughout their letters one senses this. "Nous parlerons de tout cela au coin de votre feu," wrote Mrs. Carter to Miss Talbot from Germany. (ii) They were all, of course, extraordinarily honest and extraordinarily sociable. And one should add that they all had a certain amount of natural vanity, of interest in themselves, a quality as necessary to the writer of a good letter as to the writer of a good diary. The result is that their letters are very sure indicators of their characters. It is with this in mind that I should like to say something of the letters of each of them.

From her earliest days, Mrs. Montagu was in love with

(i) William Cowper, Letters, World's Classics, (1908), 254.

(ii) Memoirs, I, 308.

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words. 'If you want to make a child intelligent,' I have heard Professor Godfrey Thomson say, 'let him talk his head off'. Mrs. Montagu's intelligence was certainly sharpened throughout her life by conversation and by her 'talking' letters. She was witty and clever. Even her detractors allowed her these epithets. Here is an extract from a letter written in her early teens explaining that a precious letter had probably miscarried: "I sent it immediately to Canterbury by the servant of a gentleman who dined here, and I suppose he forgot to put it in the post. I am reconciled to the carelessness of the fellow since it has procured to me so particular a mark of your concern. If my letter were sensible, what would be the mortification, that instead of having the honour to kiss your Grace's hands, it must lie confined in the footman's pocket, with greasy gloves, rotten apples, a pack of dirty cards, and the only companion of its sort, a tender epistle from his sweetheart, 'tru till deth'; perhaps by its situation subject to be kicked by his master every morning, till at last, by ill-usage and rude company, worn too thin for any other use, it may make its exit in lighting a tobacco-pipe." (i) That effusive style was pruned by the years until in late life Mrs. Montagu wrote, as to Lord Kaimes, with the direct simplicity of experience, lighting up her words here and there by an apt image. When Kaimes tells her he will incorporate some of her ideas in a publication, she laments that they will lie there "like maggots in amber". Always her

(i) Climenson, I, 12-13.

wit has a sound foundation of good sense. In a letter on the death of Kaines for example she anticipates the argument in Kipling's Cities and Thrones and Powers; "I shall go to Northumberland next autumn and pass three months there just as if I had a lease for Methusalem's life, for though one thinks in one's own manner, one acts in the way of the world, and leaves behind one an example as foolish as that one has followed, and the world grows older without growing wiser. Human reason is a mere rhetorician: it talks well, flourishes finely and never persuades; it seems as if its office was only to harangue." (i)

"This season's Daffodil
 She never hears,
 What change, what chance, what chill,
 Cut down last year's;
 But with bold countenance,
 And knowledge small,
 Esteems her seven days' continuance
 To be perpetual.

So Time that is o'er kind
 To all that be,
 Ordains us e'er as blind,
 As bold as she:
 That in our very death,
 And burial sure,
 Shadow to shadow, well persuaded, saith
 See how our works endure!" (ii)

Words never failed Mrs. Montagu. And her letters are full of her activities, of her reading, of her building schemes, of her assemblies, of the people she met, of fashions she had seen, of medicines she could recommend, of her religious and

(i) Blunt, II, 130.

(ii) Rudyard Kipling's Verse, Inclusive Edition, (1934), 479.

moral opinions, of everything, in fact that went to make up her crowded hour of life except her inmost feelings. The deep things were dumb in her. But all that contemporaries can tell us, all that we can ever know of Mrs. Montagu is to be found in her correspondence. (i)

Of all the Bluestocking letters the most admirable are those in the series between Mrs. Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot. These letters have not the range and the scope of Mrs. Montagu's letters, nor the irrepressible spirits and humour of those of Mrs. Thrale: but judged from a purely literary standpoint they have more merit than any of the letters of the other Bluestockings and they make very pleasant reading. They are the letters of two eighteenth century gentlewomen, with common ideals but distinctive personalities. Mrs. Carter and Miss Talbot were women of character built deliberately on religious principles. To the modern reader their letters would be too serious-minded. Published with the not inappropriate motto, "We took sweet counsel together, and walked in the house of God as friends", (ii) they would hardly have a popular reception nowadays. But the curious reader is amply rewarded. To begin with, the outlook of those

(i) There may still be undiscovered secrets of the eighteenth century in those thousands of pages, secrets such as the one Mr. J.M. Beatty discovered when he was able to identify certain persons in an incident in the life of Charles Churchill from Mrs. Montagu's letters. See Modern Language Notes, xli, 1926, 384-6.

(ii) Carter-Talbot Corres., I, Title page. From Psalm lv, Old Version.

two women is refreshingly sane. From this life, they expected little:

"The spider's most attenuated thread,
Is cord, is cable, to the tender tie
On human bliss; it breaks with every breeze".(1)

And yet they were both wise enough to know that what alone can make this life bearable is a whole-hearted devotion to the task in hand as a God-gifted opportunity. Therefore they gave themselves with abandon to "the lowliest duties." Sure of the eternal world, to this world's demands as to their friends, they gave the courtesy of their undivided attention. Mrs. Carter's sphere was more circumscribed than that of Miss Talbot, for the former lived most of her life in Deal in a comparatively small, clerical circle. Her relationships outside that circle were sustained by correspondence and by frequent visits to London. Miss Talbot, brought up in Secker's household moved in a more fashionable circle and had indeed more taste for the pleasures of wordly society, for dancing and masquerade and races. The balance of her personality seems all the more striking when one remembers her delight in amusement and good company, a balance not obvious from her published works other than her letters, for these are very serious and pious and one is always conscious of the shadow of her early disappointment. But in the letters we see her living moments and sense her adoption of the Miltonic philosophy:

(1) Ibid., I, 277. Quoted by Miss Talbot.

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"The mind is its own place and of itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven."

These letters then, are full of dignity and wisdom but they are full of life too. Nothing that is of living interest to the writer of the letter can fail to have interest for its recipient. The stable background of the correspondence is the pleasant English countryside, chiefly the countryside of Kent and Oxfordshire. It is a background gay with English flowers, with violets and primroses and lilies-of-the-valley, with roses and pinks and jasmine, and musical with the songs of English birds, in particular the songs of nightingales and cuckoos. Sometimes that background is blotted out by the smoke of London, as once by the smoke from a sugar bakery;(i) sometimes by a stirring political event, as by the scare of a French invasion in 1745 when the smiths in Kent worked all night to get up arms and a force of 2,000 was mustered in a day.(ii) But for the most part it is against that background that we see the daily lives of these two Bluestockings. We see Miss Carter riding over the Kentish downs, or Miss Talbot on the pleasant slopes in Oxfordshire. We see them occupied with domestic affairs in their country houses, or writing, or reading Clarissa, or Tom Jones or Pascal or The Rambler; or jolting over the unpaved English roads in stuffy and uncomfortable carriages.

Nothing that is of importance to the one, is too small to

(i) Ibid., I, 365. (ii) Ibid., I, 108-110.

be of importance to the other. The correspondent is everything. "Me voici à la joie de mon cœur, toute seule dans ma chambre à vous écrire paisiblement: rien ne m'est si agréable que cet état" wrote Mme. de Sévigné, that queen of letter-writers.(i) And so in Mrs. Carter's letters to Miss Talbot—and indeed to all her correspondents, the chief among others being Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Vesey—there is much chit-chat, about her geraniums and myrtles, about 'her little fat nephew', (ii) about puddings and cakes and homely things, the efficacy of tar-water or "the strawberry receipt for my Lord Bath" (iii) Similarly in Miss Talbot's letters we have a reflection of the manifold, often trivial duties that fell to her lot in the Secker household: "Tis a note to this body, a message to that, an errand to one end of the house and a whim that sends me to the other; a robin to be fed at this window, and a tom-tit to be attended to at another, cats or chickens, or spinsters, or ague patients. To be sure Methusalem was a happy man, if he had any genius for filling up his time. In so short a life as fourscore or an hundred years, one has really no leisure for writing long letters."(iv) Nor is humour lacking, a quiet humour, it is true, but none the less genuine for that; so Mrs. Carter wrote about a clergyman who in the petition for the King before his sermon, prayed for George and family (v) and Miss Talbot wrote, "Two of our hens

(i) Letters, Les Éditions Variétés, 58.

(ii) Pennington, her biographer.

(iii) Carter to Montagu, I, 185.

(iv) Carter to Talbot, Corres., I, 145.

(v) Ibid., I, 38.

are called Cleopatra and Octavia; my mother named them, and with perfect justice, and we divert ourselves with studying how the chickens take after them". (i)

But for variety and spontaneity, none of the letters of the other ladies come near the letters of Mrs. Thrale. (II) They have the faults and the merits of all her written work and indeed of her whole nature. There is a most refreshing out-with-it quality in Hester Thrale and in her writings that wakes an immediate response and is at the opposite pole from dullness. The variety of her nature is not only obvious in the matter of her letters but in the way they differ according to the correspondent. The best are those to Dr. Johnson, which perhaps because they are conditioned by the character of her correspondent are natural and frank, and more controlled than her later letters. Johnson praised them in terms that anticipate Sam Weller's classic definition of the art of letter-writing: "Never imagine that your letters are long: they are always too short for my curiosity. I do not know that I was ever content with a single perusal." (iii) Here is a characteristic passage from a letter written in the happy Streatham days: "When will you come home? I shall be wondrous glad to see you, though I write everything so I shall have nothing to tell; but I shall have you safe in your bow window to run to, when anything comes

(i) Ibid, II, 115.

(ii) I am not concerned with her later letters, as Mrs. Piozzi.

(iii) Letters To and From the Late Dr. Johnson, (1788), I, 82.

in my head and you say that's what you are kept for, you know."⁽¹⁾ The letters to Queeney mostly written under the stress and excitement of the Piozzi marriage are vivid reflectors of Mrs. Thrale's state of mind. It is worth noting that her best letters were written when she was Thrale's wife. The controls were off after his death, and although she was indisputably happy, Mrs. Piozzi was not such an attractive personality as Mrs. Thrale.

It is appropriate to say something here of Mrs. Thrale's last two letters to Dr. Johnson. When the latter wrote her roughly on hearing from her of the marriage proposal, she answered with such dignity that Johnson was constrained to write again, to utter "one sigh more of tenderness." ⁽¹¹⁾ Answering this letter Mrs. Thrale was at the top of her bent. She was writing to Dr. Johnson; she had not yet achieved her love-marriage; happiness was near but not yet realised: "Not only my good wishes, but my most fervent prayers for your health and consolation shall for ever attend and follow my dear Mr. Johnson. Your last letter is sweetly kind, and I thank you for it most sincerely. Have no fears for me however; no real fears... He [Piozzi] is a religious man, a sober man and a thinking man — he will not injure me, I am sure he will not, let nobody injure him in your good opinion, which he is most solicitous to obtain and preserve, and the harsh letter you wrote me at first grieved him to the very heart. Accept his esteem, my dear Sir, do; and his promise to treat with long continued respect and

(1) John Rylands Library Bulletin, xv, 1931, 483.

(11) Queeney Letters, 152.

and tenderness the friend whom you once honoured with your regard and who will never cease to be, my dear Sir, your truly affectionate and faithful servant." (i) "If, as many have contended," wrote James Clifford "the art of letter-writing is the art of being oneself—of revealing personality more subtly than is possible in more formal authorship—then surely Mrs. Piozzi stands in the front rank of correspondents." (ii) That statement applies equally well to Mrs. Thrale, but the personality of Mrs. Thrale was more winsome than that of Mrs. Piozzi.

Mrs. Chapone's intelligent, improving but loving nature shines out in all her letters. These two qualities, the quality of the moral reformer (whose morals were, of course, built on Christian standards) and of the loving friend characterise all her correspondence. The letters to Richardson have already been mentioned. To Sir William Weller Pepys she wrote "le besoin d'aimer et d'être aimée will never leave me, I believe, whilst I exist," and in her rôle of public censor of morals she wrote also to Pepys, an interesting attack on the possible effects of novel reading: "...those who constantly jog on in the plain paths of duty have seldom occasion for those violent exertions which usually constitute the dignity of fictitious characters: and it is this false glare and parade of virtue and sentiment which perpetually disgust me in works of fiction, particularly those of the French writers and which I think extremely pernicious by the tendency they have to

(i) Queeney Letters, 153.

(ii) "Mrs. Piozzi's Letters", Essays presented to David Nichol Smith, (1946), 167.

encourage young people to admit and pardon in themselves improper situations with the hope of acquitting themselves under them like the heroes and heroines they read of. He, who best knew human nature, makes our guilt to consist in the first indulgence of desire, not in those actions which naturally proceed from it, and for which a person once enslaved by passion is perhaps hardly responsible." (i)

Mrs. Delany's Autobiography and Correspondence (ii) presents to us the everyday gossip of women of good society in the eighteenth century, no little gift. . . As one would expect there are some enchanting glimpses of the costume of the day. Here is a description of an extraordinary dress worn at Court: "The Duchess of Queensbury's clothes pleased me best: they were white satin embroidered, the bottom of the petticoat brown hills covered with all sorts of weeds and every breadth had an old stump of a tree that ran up almost to the top of the petticoat, broken and ragged and worked with brown chenille, round which twined nasturtiums, ivy, honeysuckles, periwinkles, convolvuluses and all sorts of twining flowers which spread and

(i) Gaussen A Later Pepys, I, 378. How similar are the fears of the effect of films on the modern mind is excellently illustrated in two such diverse publications as Towards the Conversion of England and Mr. A.P. Herbert's The Water Gipsies. This passage is from the former. "The most popular art, that of the cinema, with its immense influence, is almost totally devoid of any Christian background. The cinema 'has shown an apparently pleasant world of unbridled desire, of love crudely sentimental or fleshly, of vast possessions, of ruthless acquisition of reckless violence, of incredible kindness; a maelstrom of excitement played upon by the glamour of false emotionalism'. 10. Mr. Herbert's The Water Gipsies is a humorous sermon on this text. (ii) Taken together, as the autobiography consists of two fragmentary pieces relating to her early life.

covered the petticoat, vines with the leaves variegated as you have seen them by the sun, all rather smaller than nature, which made them look very light; the robings and facings were little green banks with all sorts of weeds, and the sleeves and the rest of the gown loose twining branches of the same sort as those on the petticoat; many of the leaves were finished with gold and part of the stumps of the trees looked like the gilding of the sun".(i) Mrs. Delany's eye was a very seeing one and her pen a very easy one, so that an occasional hour with her letters is a pleasant escape into the circle in which she moved. Nor do her comments on people and events lack shrewdness, a salt that brings forth much flavour.

In Mrs. Vesey's letters there is, alas, an image of the pathetic confusion of her mind. They are "vague and chaotic"(ii) "What my pen can perform is so gauche," she wrote, "so diabolical, that I should throw it in the fire for ever, if it was not for its fetching answers.—In spite of my resolution to be legible, confusion takes possession of my pen and head and I find the lamp of the mind sinking in its socket and had I courage to face the world unknown, I should wish the flame quite extinct."(iii) Yet through the unpunctuated, chaotic pages there are indications of Mrs. Vesey's charm as a conversationalist. She reported to Mrs. Montagu that one day walking in a London park, she met a coachman carrying a very

(i) Autobiography and Correspondence, I, 147-8.

(ii) Blunt, Edinburgh Review, Oct., 1925, 366.

(iii) Bluestocking Letters, Edit. R.B.Johnson, 129.

pretty child. She asked whose it was. The answer came pat, "Lady Pelham's, Madam, and we have six more as beautiful as what you see." (i) On another occasion she described how at a summer morning performance of opera in London when the windows were open for the heat, a tender passage was interrupted by a "shrill voice crying 'Asparagus' under the window, which made a general laugh." (ii)

When we come to the letters of Hannah More and Fanny Burney, the youngest of the leading Bluestockings, we jump a gap of twenty years (iii)— an important jump because gradually throughout the eighteenth century, the language was becoming more and more supple, more and more natural. It was now "turning to the modern" (iv) and was becoming therefore a more pliant medium for letter-writing. Hannah More must have been conscious of the stiffness of the style of some of her correspondents, for she wrote to Mrs. Boscawen: "Now to me the epistolary style is what it ought to be, when the writer, by a happy and becoming negligence, has the art of making you believe that he could write a great deal better if he would, but that he has too much judgment to use great exertions on small occasions—he will not draw Ulysses's bow to shoot at a pigeon. It is not, however, that I think letter-writing trifling because it is familiar, any more than I think an epigram easy because it is short." (v) The style then, of the letters of

(i) Blunt, Edinburgh Review, Oct. 1925, 372. (ii) Ibid., 373.

(iii) Except in the case of Mrs. Thrale. She was born in 1741, Hannah More in 1745, Fanny Burney in 1752.

(iv) Saintsbury, The English Novel, 153.

(v) Roberts, Memoirs, II, 36.

both Hannah More and Fanny Burney, is more modern. The qualities evident in Fanny Burney's letters— her keen observation, her intense awareness, her egotism and her prudery— are essentially the qualities revealed in the diary, and so there is scarcely need to illustrate them here.

Some of the letters of Hannah More's Bluestocking days are delightful. It is pleasant to see her displaying enthusiasm for Garrick's acting or "getting tipsy twice a day upon Herefordshire cider."⁽¹⁾ But her transparent honesty, her thorough goodness are very present in her early letters, as is her philanthropic passion. The former is omnipresent. The latter is well illustrated in a letter to Horace Walpole describing how in Bristol one Sunday morning, people at church were startled by the sound of the town-crier's bell: "They found that the bellman was crying a reward of a guinea to anyone who would produce a poor negro girl who had run away, because she would not return to one of those trafficking islands, whither her master was resolved to send her. To my great grief and indignation, the poor trembling wretch was dragged out from a hole in the top of a house, where she had hid herself, and forced on board ship. Alas! I did not know it till too late or I would have run the risk of buying her and made you and the rest of my humane, I had almost said human friends, help me out, if the cost had been considerable."⁽¹¹⁾ And the seed of

(1) Roberts, Memoirs, I, 100.

(11) Ibid., 235.

her discontent with the fashionable world was sown very soon after her first contact with it. As early as 1775, her conscience pricked her for dining at Mrs. Montagu's on a Sunday evening. A friend wrote admonishing her for thus breaking the Sabbath but "Conscience had done its work before; nay, was busy at the time; and if it did not dash the cup of pleasure to the ground, infused at least a tincture of wormwood into it. I did think of the alarming call, 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' and I thought of it to-night at the opera.'" (1)

The two inveterate diarists among the Bluestockings were Fanny Burney and Mrs. Thrale. Fanny was more successful, perhaps because she herself was her first interest, and for that reason her zeal in giving a continuous and consistent record of her experiences, observations, sentiments, never flags. One of the most remarkable features of the Diary in fact, is its sustained interest. It is impossible to praise it too highly as a faithful representation of the middleclass society of the day. Yet even that description is too narrow. All the great ones of the century pass through Fanny Burney's pages from the King and Queen downwards. There you will encounter not only Dr. Johnson and his Boswell, but Edmund Burke and Sir Joshua Reynolds, Warren Hastings and Edward Gibbon, Soame Jenyns and David Garrick, Mrs. Delany, and Mrs. Siddons, to mention only some of the choicest spirits of the age. In its own way it is a superb piece of work. It makes no attempt to interpret or analyse character, no attempt to

(1) Memoirs, I, 56.

give us people's thoughts or emotions. But it so brilliantly presents the author's contemporaries to us, their manners and mannerisms, their habits, speech and actions, their interests and their friends, that it puts us in a position to interpret and analyse them if we choose to do so. It is curious that while Fanny Burney's art is like the art of the camera in showing us the outward man, or rather the man as he appears to his neighbour, she is not generally concerned to describe dress or feature. This may be partly explained by her lack of interest in the matter and partly by the fact that she was painfully short-sighted. When she does mention dress, she usually has an ulterior motive, as in the case of Mrs. Walsingham and Mrs. Warren Hastings, and therefore the description indicates the nature of the costume without suggesting line or colour. Having dined with Mrs. Walsingham in 1782, she wrote: "She was violently dressed, - a large hoop, flowers in her small and full-dressed cap, ribands and ornaments extremely shown, and a fan in her hand". (i) Similarly, while she appreciated Mrs. Warren Hastings' manners, she deplored her desire to be conspicuous. At Mrs. Montagu's in 1792, she appeared in a dress "like that of an Indian princess and so much the most splendid, from its ornament and style and fashion though chiefly of muslin, that everybody else looked underdressed in her presence." (ii)

If Fanny had been as interested in dress, figure, and

(i) Diary, II, 145.

(ii) Ibid., V, 81-2.

feature as in manners and speech, her diary would have been as good as a talking film of eighteenth-century Society. The well known picture of Dr. Johnson (i) in his snuff-coloured coat, gold buttons and black worsted stockings is unique. And yet what Fanny has given us of Dr. Johnson on other occasions, and of an uncounted host of other people, is far more valuable than any mere coloured photograph could be. The Dr. Johnson of the Diary is a Dr. Johnson whom Boswell never saw, Dr. Johnson as a woman admirer saw him. And the figure is a very endearing one. This is the teasing, friendly, very human Johnson who loved to chat late into the night in Streatham's pleasant library. Fanny tells us she had a thousand delightful conversations with him, and in the end, when he felt betrayed by Mrs. Thrale, although Fanny's sympathies were very torn, she could alleviate a little; his sick misery. In 1783, he was "quite touchingly affectionate" (ii) to her. She was his "dearest of all dear ladies". (iii) In November, 1784, she saw him for the last time and noticed that this was the first occasion on which he had not pressed her to stay, but merely begged her to come again. On the day of the next visit - 10th December— the Doctor was too weak to see her and in the evening her Father brought home news of his death. Dr. Johnson is one of the more prominent figures in the Diary with Mrs. Thrale, Mrs. Delany, "Daddy" Crisp, General D'Arbly; but the canvas is a very full one. And as one joys to discover the artist's face in a mediæval painting, so not the least

(i) Diary, II, 239

(ii) Ibid., 226.

pleasurable experience in reading Fanny Burney's Diary is to make acquaintance with the sometimes garrulous, sometimes gushing, but always vivid, always interesting, and often amusing authoress.

From what has been said it will be deduced that the Diary is an invaluable book alike to the student of literature and of social history, but it is also an almost certain success with the ordinary reader, for apart from the sheer interest of the matter, there is plenty of entertainment in the book over and above by the way. Fanny knows how to tell a good story; witness alone the excellent description of George the III's arrival home after a hard day's hunting in soaking rain, and the equerry's disappointment to be offered no more than a drink of barley water:

" 'After all the labours', cried he [the equerry] , 'of the chase, all the riding, the trotting, the galloping, the leaping, the — with your favour, ladies, I beg pardon, I was going to say a strange word, but the — the perspiration, and — and all that — after being wet through over head, and soused through under feet, and popped into ditches, and jerked over gates, what lives we do lead! Well, it's all honour! that's my only comfort! Well after all this, fagging away like mad from eight in the morning to five or six in the afternoon, home we come, looking like so many drowned rats, with not a dry

thread about us, nor a morsel within us, — sore to the very bone and forced to smile all the time! and then after all this what do you think follows? — 'Here, Goldsworthy,' cries His Majesty; so up I comes to him, bowing profoundly, and my hair dripping down to my shoes; 'Goldsworthy,' cries His Majesty. 'Sir,' says I, smiling agreeably, with the rheumatism just creeping all over me! but still, expecting something a little comfortable, I wait patiently to know his gracious pleasure, and then, 'Here, Goldsworthy, I say!' he cries, 'will you have a little barley water?' Barley water in such a plight as that! Fine compensation for a wet jacket, truly! — barley water! I never heard of such a thing in my life! barley water after a whole day's hard hunting!

'And pray did you drink it?'

'I drink it? — Drink barley water? no, no; not come to that neither! But there it was, sure enough! — in a jug fit for a sick room; just such a thing as you put upon a hob in a chimney, for some poor miserable soul that keeps his bed! just such a thing as that! — And 'Here Goldsworthy,' says His Majesty, 'here's the barley water!'

'And did the King drink it himself?'

'Yes, God bless His Majesty! but I was too humble a subject to do the same as the King! — Barley water, quoth I! — Ha! ha! — a fine treat truly! — Heaven defend me! I'm not come to that neither! bad enough too, but not so bad as that?' (i)

Mrs. Thrale was also an egotist and a certain amount of egotism is necessary in a good diarist; but her interest in herself was not quite strong enough to give unity to her diaries, or rather, her interest in others was equally vivid. From the age of sixteen till the time of her death, she kept all kinds of diaries and journals including one, chiefly a record of her children's doings and sayings, with the unexpected title, "Minced Meat for Pies." Three of her diaries and journals particularly concern us here as relating to her Bluestocking days and as providing entertaining reading. These are Thraliana, and the Journals of her Welsh and French tours made in company with her husband and Dr. Johnson in 1774 and 1775 respectively. When she was thirty-five, Mr. Thrale gave his wife a set of "six handsome quarto blank books, bound in undressed calf, each bearing on its cover a red label stamped in gold with the title Thraliana." (i) Into these books she poured out thoughts, feelings, observations, moral and religious reflections, anecdotes, autobiographical matter, so that the whole is an odd assemblage of "material both trumpery and precious, only to be compared to the contents of some old-fashioned work-box where trinkets of gold and silver lie mixed up with screws of yellowed paper bearing scribbled recipes, twists of silk, ancient bouts rimés and fragments of tarnished brocade." (ii) And, at least to a woman, it is just as delight-

(i) Thraliana, Intro. x.

(ii) The Times Literary Supplement, 30th May, 1942.

ful to rummage in Thraliana as in an old work-box, for one will certainly be rewarded by stumbling on precious things. There are, for example, delightful, informal glimpses of Johnson as here: "Cards, dress, dancing, all found their advocates in Johnson, who inculcated on principle, the cultivation of arts which others reject as luxuries or consider as superfluities. Somebody would say 'Such a lady never touches a card.' 'How then does she get rid of her time?' says Johnson, 'does she drink drams?' 'Such a person never suffers gentlemen to buzz in her daughter's ears'. 'Who is to buzz in her ears then?— the footman!' "(i) Or again, "'And yet' says Johnson, 'a woman has such power between the age of twenty-five and forty-five, that she may tie a man to a post and whip him if she will.' I thought they must begin earlier and leave off sooner, but he says that 'tis not girls but women who inspire the violent and lasting passions— Cleopatra was forty-three years old when Anthony lost the world for her".(ii) Her diaries were indeed an inanimate confidante to which she could tell everything, and having done so, having crystallized her experiences, if happy, they became more delightful, if sad, less bitter. One day at Streatham Mrs. Thrale's guests were comparing their friends to flowers, Mrs. Montagu to the rose, Sophy Streatfield to the jasmine; "and as for me I shall petition to be set down for a sprig of myrtle, which the more

(i) Thraliana, 98.

(ii) Ibid., 386.

it is crushed, the more it discloses its sweetness", (i) wrote the hostess in her diary. In describing things, as in that passage, Mrs. Thrale sometimes achieved an interesting detachment, a kind of detachment which is, I think, a peculiarly feminine quality.

The travel journals mentioned are of great interest to students of Dr. Johnson, for he too kept records of the tours. But they are equally interesting to the student of Mrs. Thrale. On both holidays there were times when Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale were completely happy in each other's company. At Pwllheli "Mr. Johnson would buy something, he said, in memory of his little mistress's market town; he is on every occasion so very kind, feels friendship so acutely and expresses it so delicately that it is wonderfully flattering to me to have his company. He could find nothing to purchase but a primer." (ii) And in Paris one night when she was not well enough to go to a play, "Mr. Johnson sat at home by me, and we criticised and talked and were happy on one another— he in huffing me and I in being huffed." (iii). But on the Welsh tour, she was not always very happy in Mr. Thrale and Dr. Johnson. "I hear Harry has had a black eye and Ralph cut his teeth with pain, but I have nobody to tell how it

(i) Thraliana, 367.

(ii) A.M. Broadley, Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale, including Mrs. Thrale's unpublished Journal of the Welsh Tour, (1910), 203.

(iii) M. Tyson and H. Guppy, The French Journals of Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale, (1932), 143.

vexes me. Mr. Thrale will not be conversed with by me on any subject, as a friend, or comforter, or adviser. Every day, more and more do I feel the loss of my mother. My present companions have too much philosophy for me. One cannot disburden one's mind to people who are watchful to cavil, or acute to contradict before the sentence is finished." (1)

In Paris she was radiantly alive and her pen most vividly descriptive. Among other things she described a foundling hospital where there were "rows of swathed babies pining away to perfect skeletons and expiring in very neat cribs with each a bottle hung to its neck filled with some milk mess, which if they can suck they may live, and if they cannot they must die." (ii) She tells us of a spittoon, "a pot to spit in", on the dining table at the house of Mme. Du Boccage. Most delightful are the interviews with nuns in their convents (similar interviews gave much pleasure to Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Montagu on their continental tour in 1763). When Mrs. Thrale remarked on the domestic duties which ladies of rank had to do in convents, she was told the story of Lady Catherine Howard trying to boil eggs till they were tender. "'What can I do at last?' says Sister Kitty, 'I put the eggs on before I went to matins that they might be tender but I think nothing will soften them for my part'." (iii)

(1) Welsh Journal, 193-4.

(ii) Franch Journal, 109.

(iii) Ibid.

Mrs. Thrale was wise not to attempt a life of Dr. Johnson, but to be content with publishing Anecdotes, for brilliant in some respects as she was, her brilliance was not able for a sustained task. Although Johnson died in November, 1784, the book was not published till March, 1786, partly through the natural delays of the post, for Mrs. Piozzi was in Italy. Meanwhile the delay gave occasion to the Press for much abuse of the much maligned woman. "The Piozzi is certainly coming (1) with her brood without father bred," announced The Morning Post. The public were avid for the book, the whole first edition of a thousand copies being sold on the day of publication. The indignation of the Bluestocking circles was typical of public opinion. They were shocked at the book's outspokenness, at its exposure of its hero's weaknesses. It is easier for us to understand this, if we remember some words of Beattie's in connection with Boswell's Journal: "Johnson's faults were balanced by many and great virtues: and when that is the case, the virtues only should be remembered, and the faults entirely forgotten." (ii) It is difficult for us who have lived through an age of realistic biography to get back to that temper of mind. Two criticisms, are, however, justly levelled at Mrs. Thrale, but they show her human and erring rather than malicious. She was an outcast from the society to which she had contributed so much of her affection and wit in the past seven or eight years. She wanted to justify her marriage, and to

(1) 19th October, 1783. (ii) W. Forbes, Life of Beattie, II 184-5

do so she gave a wrong emphasis to difficult traits in Johnson's character. At the same time she wanted to make capital of her associations with the great man. And yet it is a very small part of the book which deals directly with Johnson's weaknesses and over and over again she impresses on the reader the greatness, the magnanimity of her subject, while not forgetting his rich humanity. It is she who gives us the picture of his "notions about eating...a leg of pork boiled till it dropped from the bone, a veal-pie with plums and sugar, or the outside cut of a salt-buttock of beef, were his favourite dainties: with regard to drink, his liking was for the strongest, as it was not the flavour but the effect he sought for, and professed to desire... For the last twelve years, however, he left off all fermented liquors. To make himself some amends indeed, he took his chocolate liberally, pouring in large quantities of cream, or even melted butter; and was so fond of fruit, that though he usually eat seven or eight large peaches of a morning before breakfast began, and treated them with proportionate attention after dinner again, yet I have heard him protest that he never had quite as much as he wished of wall-fruit: except once in his life..."(1)

The living Johnson, human but pious, charitable, lion-hearted is certainly in these two hundred pages. We see him wheedling Mrs. Thrale to sit up with him far into the morning hours, but rewarding her good-nature by his exceedingly good company

Here is the Johnson "who hated to be left out of any innocent merriment that was going forward," (i) whose inventive powers were most quick and fertile, "whose pity gave ere charity began", whose "spirit of devotion had an energy that affected all who ever saw him pray in private," (ii) whose inventive powers were most quick and fertile and to whom conversation was the greatest solace of his "radically wretched" pilgrimage. "The image of Johnson which emerges from its pages," writes Katherine Balderston "is a living one and in the larger sense, a truthful one. It is the same Johnson who moves with such Titanic vigour through the pages of Boswell and is at the same time both a corroboration and a supplement to that grander portrait. The composite picture is truer than either one alone. Upon this larger truthfulness of her book must rest our final estimate of its value." (iii)

"Evelina is the last but, historically the most important, work of the Bluestocking circle to be considered as a genuine literary achievement. More will be said subsequently of its

(i) 133.

(ii) 61.

(iii) Thraliana, Intro. xxviii. Peter Pindar launched one of his clever satires on the stormy sea of the Boswell-Thrale controversy. It ~~which~~ contains the lines:

"That by th' emphatic Johnson, christened Bozzy
This, by the Bishop's licence Dame Piozzi;
Whose widowed name, by toppers loved, was Thrale,
Bright in the annals of election ale."

Bozzy and Piozzi. Pindar's Works, 1794, I, 331.

phenomenal character and importance from the point of view of the history of literature. For the moment I am concerned with its intrinsic merit, which is considerable, yet is often overlooked because of the book's wider historical importance. It is a Bluestocking production in its very bones, for two reasons. Firstly, its author carries on the work of Steele and Addison in realising the artistic value of the domestic scene. Secondly, in so doing, she satirizes the follies of the fashionable world, in this also carrying on the work of the essayists but through the subtler medium of the novel. Evelina is a convincing picture of eighteenth-century life.

"To open Cecilia or Evelina is to be transported straight into eighteenth century London, crowded, shrill, diverse, bustling, with its curious blend of elegance and crudeness, of ceremoniousness and brutality". (1) And if we can ever doubt the almost self-evident truthfulness of the descriptions of balls and assemblies and ridottos, of Ranelagh or Vauxhall or Drury Lane Theatre or Cox's Museum or Bath, we need only turn to the appreciative words of Fanny Burney's contemporaries. With one voice they hail the work for its veracity. And it is not only the setting they vouch for. They have met people just like the characters. Fanny peoples her world with real men and women. In the Diary fiction operates on fact. In

(1) Lord David Cecil, "Fanny Burney's Novels", Essays presented to David Nichol Smith, (1946), 216.

Evelina fact operates on fiction. Her memory, her bird-lime' (i) memory aided her here, for she had an extraordinary knack of remembering real conversations.

But even more so, the sense of character which makes the Diary so convincing, gives the breath of life to the creatures of her brain. One is not impressed with Fanny's understanding of her fellow-men either in the Diary or in the novels, but she has the dramatists' quality of awareness which stands her in good stead. "For vulgarity ... she has the eye of a lynx" (ii) and few writers have surpassed her in describing the anguish that women can feel if they are socially embarrassed. One of the best episodes with which to illustrate this last quality is the borrowing of Lord Orville's coach by the Branghtons, on their discovery that Evelina was acquainted with him.

" 'Goodness then,' cried young Branghton, 'if I was Miss, if I would not make free with his Lordship's coach to take me to town'.

'Why, ay', said the father 'there would be some sense in that; that would be making some use of a Lord's acquaintance, for it would save us coach-hire'

.... ...

'Not for the world,' cried I, very much alarmed: 'indeed it is utterly impossible.'

(i) "Dr. Burney says you carry bird-lime in your brain for everything that lights there sticks." Letter from Mrs. Thrale to Fanny Burney, Diary, I, 460.

(ii) C.E. Vaughan, Sterne and the Novel of His Times, C.H.E.L., X, 65.

'Ma foi, child,' said Mme. Duval 'you don't know no more of the world than if you was a baby. Pray, Sir, (to one of the footmen), tell that coachman to draw up, for I wants to speak to him.' "

But the most painful part of the proceedings was to follow, for the coach had an accident and then young Branghton broke a window. To crown all embarrassments he went to Lord Orville's house, ostensibly to apologise, and tormented Evelina with an account of the visit. He heard that Lord Orville's sister was to be married "...so it come into my head, as he was so affable, that I'd ask him for his custom. So I says, says I, my Lord, says I, if your Lordship i'n't engaged particularly, my father is a silversmith, and he'd be very proud to serve you, says I: and Miss Anville, as danced with you, is his cousin, and she's my cousin too, and she'd be very much obligated to you I am sure." Poor Evelina had to write a letter to Lord Orville to disassociate herself entirely with the borrowing of the coach.(i) It was no wonder that the public were delighted with such a lively portrayal of contemporary life and that they were avid for Cecilia. While the later book lacks the "dewy freshness"(ii) of Evelina, Fanny writes there with a surer hand. Cecilia entered society with more

(i) Evelina(1794), II 70ff.

(ii) Lord David Cecil, "Fanny Burney's Novels" Essays presented to David Nichol Smith, (1946), 224.

poise than Evelina, and that is only to say that Fanny was older when she wrote her second novel, for we identify her as rapidly with Cecilia as with Evelina. And Cecilia, like the more mature Fanny, is more of a Bluestocking than Evelina, more impatient with dress, dancing and cards, the lack of depth and true feeling in the fashionable of the day. Nor can it be doubted that the author of Cecilia had grown in knowledge of her fellow-men. Moreover, the later book demonstrates Fanny's delightful sense of the ludicrous, as well as Evelina. But granting its many merits, Cecilia is a poor second to Evelina.

These works, then, we might call the readable legacy of the Bluestockings. They are unequal in literary merit, but an hour or two spent with any one of them will convince the reader that none of them deserves to be neglected. It remains to indicate the possible literary significance of the emergence of the Bluestockings.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BLUESTOCKINGS IN THE HISTORY OF LITERATURE.

"Without those forerunners, Jane Austen and the Brontës and George Eliot could no more have written than Shakespeare could have written without Marlowe, or Marlowe without Chaucer, or Chaucer without those forgotten poets, who paved the ways and tamed the natural savagery of the tongue. For masterpieces are not single and solitary births... Jane Austen should have laid a wreath upon the grave of Fanny Burney, and George Eliot done homage to the robust shade of Eliza Carter.." Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own, (1929), Penguin Books (1945), 55.

In discussing the long-range influence of the Bluestockings in the history of literature, much of what I have to say is speculative. How has the history of literature been modified, if at all, by the entry of women on to the field? What qualities have women writers introduced into literature? In what branches of literature has their influence been most felt? Was Mme. de Staël right when she said "La génie n'a pas de sexe", and are we to deduce from that that the emergence of women-writers has meant an increase in the number of writers, but no change in the nature of literature? Each of these and many kindred questions provide ample scope for research. My business here is merely to suggest in what ways the emergence of the Bluestockings has influenced and may still influence our literature.

Some general observations about the Bluestockings are relevant here. It is important that they were all women of irreproachable moral character and of manifest good sense. Aphra Behn whose dramas were written in the profligate manner of the dramas of her day and the crazy Duchess of Newcastle were bogeys that early eighteenth century parents and husbands could too readily summon to scare daughters and wives who might have pretensions to book learning. Some kind of stigma there must be perhaps, on any class of human beings which flies in the face of long-established convention. But through time, the stigma becomes less offensive. A woman would choose perhaps to be

called a 'bluestocking,' a pedant, rather than to be called a profligate or a lunatic. It is worth noticing too that all the major Bluestockings except Mrs. Delany and Mrs. Catherine Talbot were not only writing but publishing too, and thereby earning money. They were professional authoresses. Women of good family, of the upper middle classes established themselves in the literary field before they were established in any of the other professions. The full significance of that, however, is rather outside the scope of this thesis.

What then were the immediate definable results? The most significant was that for the first time in literature, life was presented to the world as seen through a woman's eyes, for Aphra Behn and the earlier women novelists of the eighteenth century saw life through men's spectacles. In the pages of the Bluestockings, women began to be depicted as women see them, and in their relation to women, not only, as hitherto, in their relation to men. For all the greatness of Criseyde and Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra, convincing and credible as they are, they are seen by men and in relation to men. It would be unfair to deny life to the women characters of Fielding, but they are unmistakably women seen by a man. There is much about their gossiping ways, their cattiness, their fussiness, their coquetry, their shape, their desirability. They are seen, if with open eyes, from the outside. But am I forgetting Richardson? The answer is that Richardson is here outside the current. There certainly was something of the "old wife" in the London bookseller and he stole a march on the fiction

of a much later day by deliberately studying women. He kept round him an admiring circle, a bevy of female talent, with whom he discussed his heroes and heroines, at the same time studying their emotions with minute particularity. Similarly he carried on a correspondence with several women and from this, too, he sucked every possible drop of information. But, leaving Richardson's novels aside, it is not really until the novels of Thackeray that one begins to sense something new in the creation of women characters by men novelists, something, I venture to suggest, which came from women-writers themselves. It was a new thing then, for men to see women in literature through women's eyes. Men too, began to be seen as women see them, for, as Mrs. Virginia Woolf has reminded us, "there is a spot the size of a shilling at the back of the head which one can never see for oneself. It is one of the good offices that sex can discharge for sex - to describe that spot the size of a shilling at the back of the head." (1)

Again the entrance of women into the house of literature was as salutary as is the entrance of women into a room full of men. The atmosphere at once changes. It becomes, bluntly, less male, more human and certainly more refined. This quality of refinement in literature was very much needed as any student

(1) A Room of One's Own, Penguin, (1945), 75.

of the four great novelists will admit. Richardson is not coarse, but his novels are very suggestive, more dangerously suggestive than many a crude modern novel or film. To speak only of their immediate influence, the Bluestocking assemblies refined literary society and therefore must have had a considerable refining influence on the literature of their day. For reasons already indicated these mixed assemblies had a limited life and a limited influence in England; but in a small measure they refined contemporary literary society as the French salons refined French society. But by the end of the eighteenth century women had established themselves in the house of literature and their presence thereafter involves a continual refining process.

Fanny Burney's novels - particularly Evelina and Cecilia demonstrate admirably the elements introduced immediately into literature by the emergence of women authoresses: the woman's view of the world, the woman's view of women and men, a new refinement. This aspect of Fanny Burney's achievement is easily appreciated if one accepts Lord David Cecil's description of her novels. He tells us that she feminized the Fielding type of novel. (1) Like Fielding she looked round about her and saw the human comedy with most observant eyes, eyes that like his, were like the lens of a panoramic camera. But the ranges of life to be seen by Fanny Burney, by an eighteenth century

(1) "Fanny Burney's Novels," Essays presented to David Nichol Smith (1946), 212-224.

woman, were much narrower than the ranges of life to be seen by an eighteenth century man. Fielding can take us out to the broad and bustling highway or to the darker haunts of London, to meet highwaymen or thieves and rogues, or ladies in their boudoirs, if he chooses. Fanny Burney's scene is the social scene, the everyday world of an eighteenth century woman. She takes us to the milliner's, or the Mercer's or the hair-dresser's, to a ball, a masquerade or an opera. Let me repeat, this was something new, this presentation of men, women and events by a woman, this dramatisation of what it means to belong to the responsive, not the creative sex. Richardson had done his utmost to analyse a woman's feelings, but for all his courses of tutorials in the feminine emotions, he was still a man. Fanny, no doubt, owed a considerable amount to him, particularly in the description of the fluctuations of her heroine's feelings. Richardson's education had not been in vain; but Fanny had her own peculiarly feminine contribution to make. And both the matter and the manner of her novels are within the limits of feminine decency and decorum.

Before considering briefly the more elusive qualities introduced into literature by the emergence of women authors, it is only fitting to say something on the unique quality of Fanny Burney's achievement. That aspect of her work is stressed by Professor Saintsbury when he tells us that she introduced the "pure novel." (1) In fact, he is saying the same thing

(1) The English Novel, (1913), 155.

as Lord David Cecil but with a different emphasis. He reminds us that Fanny was not concerned with the common elements of the earlier novel, the picaresque, the marvellous, the mediaeval, nor even emotional analysis. What she did attempt to do was to tell a story consistent both with the common doings and the common feelings of daily life, to adopt the phrase of her greater successor (i). "Miss Burney", says Professor Saintsbury, "hit upon ... the real principle and essence of the novel as distinguished from the romance - its connection with actual and ordinary life - life studied freshly and directly 'from the life'." (ii) One interesting fact that tends to impress on the reader, the new quality in Fanny Burney's novels is the closer kinship of the life of our day to the life of her day. Both Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones were published before the turn of the century when 'life was still subject to exceptional interests and incidents,' when the "life of 'mergency'" was the ordinary life (iii). But life like our prose was gradually 'turning to the modern' throughout the century, and that is one reason why Fanny Burney's novels are in one sense more 'realistic' to us than the ^{novels} ~~words~~ of Fielding.

The new novel is described variously as the 'novel of manners', 'the domestic novel', 'the tea-table novel', but the best description is just 'the novel of everyday life'. The historical value of this new kind of literature, however

(i) Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey, Everyman, 6

(ii) Op. cit., 154.

(iii) Saintsbury, Op. cit., 154.

accidentally Fanny Burney stumbled on it, however unconscious and short-lived was her own mastery of it, is phenomenal.

It not only showed the way to Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen - and who can estimate the influence of Jane Austen on nineteenth and twentieth century fiction? - it contributed considerably to the development of the novel proper, the novel that is the slice of ordinary life. In Evelina are the beginnings of realistic fiction.

When one comes to the more elusive qualities introduced into literature by the emergence of women authors one is on very slippery ground. Indeed it would be very rash to speculate on the matter without a thorough knowledge of nineteenth and twentieth century fiction and a sound grasp of human psychology. One might venture to suggest two qualities that women may have contributed and may yet contribute to literature: a natural and often delicate understanding of human relationships and a corresponding desire to deal with them, and an appreciation of detail. "It is peculiarly distasteful to a man to have to work on problems of human relationships," says Miss Esther Harding, "... for the woman the task is not so difficult. She meets her greatest inertia when the need is to become conscious ... of accurate definition - not when dealing with relations" (1).

"Women", says Mr. V. H. Mottram "have a distinct aptitude for detail ... the male is bored with detail and prefers broad

(1) The Way of All Women, 301.

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outlines." (i)

Such were the forces set in motion by the Bluestockings, forces which have scarcely yet had time to bring forth fruit, for the tumult and the shouting of the feminist controversy have not yet died away. Men still write books on the place of women in society, books expressing widely divergent opinions. And we can carry sex-consciousness too far in our consideration of the arts. Even Mrs. Virginia Woolf who stresses the danger of sex-consciousness in the artist finds in the genius a certain sexual harmony. "It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly"(ii) Now it is undoubtedly true that the sexes have something to give each other which is of value artistically. This has been evident in history from the days of the Anglo-Saxon abbesses when Hild, Abbess of Hartlepool, who had herself learned something of the administration at which she excelled from Aidan, encouraged Caedmon's poetic talent and taught him "the whole series of sacred history", or when Eoniface "exiled in the dark places of heathendom" turned "to Eadburga in the calm of her Abbey at Minster for intellectual as well as spiritual companionship." (iii) "Every Johnson has his Thrale," says Mrs. Woolf. (iv) But what the sexes at their best have to give each other seems to me to be a release, or a chance of

(i) The Physical Basis of Personality, Pelican Books, (1944), 27.

(ii) A Room of One's Own, 86.

(iii) Gardiner, English Girlhood at School, 16-17

(iv) Op. cit., 72.

fulfilment of personality, or circumstances which are highly favourable to the arts; but to call these things the 'light of life' (1) is confusing. Mrs. Woolf may be right but it is hardly with such sexual terms as 'woman-manly' or 'man-womanly' that I should choose to describe the genius of Shakespeare or Keats or Sterne or Cowper or Lamb or Coleridge to name the artists she herself describes. For in the sublime realms of art as in the Kingdom of Heaven, there is neither male nor female, nor indeed a harmonising of these kinds; but rather a new creation. For the artist absorbed in his work, triumphant over time is also surely triumphant over sex, and not merely unconscious of it. Yet, paradoxically, he or she is most man or woman when he or she is most absorbed, most inspired, most divine. For the eternal principle remains that whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life shall find it.

(1) Woolf, Op. cit., 72.

APPENDIX.

Mrs. Montagu's Letters to Lord Kaimes, 1766-1782.

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| I. Description of Correspondence. | 252 |
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DESCRIPTION OF CORRESPONDENCE.

In September, 1946, a miscellaneous collection of historical documents and correspondence from Abercairney House, Perthshire, was deposited in the General Register House, Edinburgh. Much of the correspondence consisted of letters received by Henry Home, the Scottish judge who took his seat on the bench as Lord Kames in February, 1752 and sat there for thirty years until within a few days of his death in December, 1782. The collection contains twenty-five letters from Elizabeth Montagu, the Queen of the Bluestockings, seemingly the main part, if not the whole, of her correspondence with the eminent judge. Hitherto the letters have not been published, but A. F. Tytler had access to them, or to some of them, when he wrote his Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Henry Home of Kames. However, he only used twelve, and since he was naturally pre-occupied with the letters as relevant documents to the life of Kames, he omitted much that is interesting with regard to Mrs. Montagu.

Tytler edited the letters with the freedom used in editing correspondence in his day. As will be clear from the yet unpublished letters, given here as they were written, Mrs. Montagu was inconsistent about punctuation and spelling, (including capitalisation). Tytler corrected her spelling, paragraphed and punctuated her letters, and published them with omissions, which he did not always indicate. In one case he telescoped two letters (See Letters E and G). Sometimes he changed words or phrases. Sometimes he italicised to indicate an emphasis not shown in the original letters. Nor was he consistent in his omissions. One imagines he omitted the things that seemed to him trivial, but there are many trivial things in the published letters. He tended to cut out the kind of information we now find interesting, "the chitt chatt" of the letters to use an unpublished phrase of Mrs. Montagu's (Letter A). One suspects also that Tytler was slightly prudish in choosing what he thought proper for publication. He carefully concealed all references to Mrs. Montagu's "spasms" and "cholick." In one of her characteristic philosophical discussions Mrs. Montagu wrote "Philosophers are as apt as fish-women to call names when they dispute." Tytler bleached that not uncolourful sentence into "Most terms are capable of different meanings." (Letter V) Again he omitted Mrs. Montagu's reference to the happiness grandchildren would bring to Blair Drummond. (Letter Y).

The letters are of great interest to any student of Mrs. Montagu, because they were written between December 10th 1766, and November 12th, 1782, when she was at the height of her fame as a patroness of letters. Moreover, they are indicative of the kind of person she was, reflecting her developing outlook on life, and the secret of her fascination for men of character and ability. The mere existence of the correspondence is illuminating. Dr Johnson, discussing literary progress in Scotland with

Boswell, sneered at Kaimes, but he was a man of outstanding character and even of genius. An acute and just judge, Kaimes had interests far wider than the law. He was a farm-owner, not only superintending his farms personally, but even working on them in his vacations. He was interested in "taste" or what we would now call "aesthetics," as is indicated on the one hand by his History of the Elements of Criticism, and on the other by his famous winter-garden at his Perthshire home at Blair-Drummond, where Mrs. Montagu hoped he would have snowdrops and cyclamen in December. (Letter A). Philosophy and metaphysics also engaged his eager mind and these studies led to an interest in education, the last book of many he wrote being, Loose Hints upon Education, chiefly concerning the Culture of the Heart.

Like most masculine men, Lord Kaimes was very attractive to women. (There is a warm letter in the collection from the Duchess of Gordon, that lovely Scotswoman who is said to have raised a regiment by offering every volunteer a kiss; and there are several letters from Lady Janet Anstruther and from Margaret, Countess of Dumfries). Mrs. Montagu fell under his spell when she met him in Edinburgh at the table of Dr. John Gregory, on her first visit to Scotland in 1766. On the same holiday she visited him at Blair-Drummond. She evidently attracted Kaimes by her vivacity and intelligence. He was something of a wit himself, and no doubt she could give a Roland for an Oliver. She had a great deal to give any man of intelligence and with Lord Kaimes, she had much in common. She shared his interest in aesthetics, and discussed naively with him in one letter the question of ornamentation in house furniture. She was enthusiastic about his winter-garden, having just been busy re-planning the spacious gardens at Sandleford with the help of "Capability Brown." She took such a genuine interest in her own farms and estates, that she could write to him, if with conscious, still with honest pride, "We, who are farmers..." And, of course she had her woman's cards to play. She flattered the elderly judge, sometimes by self-depreciation, sometimes by assuring him of her constant thoughts of him. In an early letter (1767), she was sure they had men in a state of pre-existence: "I do not know when, nor indeed where, whether we first met on the Orb of this Earth, had a short Coquetry in the Planet Venus, or a sober platonick love in Saturn, but I am sure we did not first meet at Edinburgh in the year 1766. Your Lordship may remember our souls did not stand like strangers at a distance making formal obeisances; the first evening we supped together at our friend Dr. Gregory's, We took up our story where it had perhaps ended some thousand years before the creation of this Globe...." (Letter C) When he left after a visit to her estate at Denton, Northumberland, in 1778, she was dismayed "that you were every moment going further from me, and that every roll of your Coach Wheels was carrying you to a greater distance. (Letter U).

When she received his Sketches of the History of Man, she wrote, "....the sketches of a Raphael could not be critically judged but by a Correggio. As well might I have sent up a paper Kite after the Eagle, in hope it wd overtake the bird of Jove as he skims along the Regions of day, as have hoped any comments of mine would have come even and level with you in any chapter of your book." (Letter R) Who could resist like graciousness? Kaimes, at any rate, met such compliments with adequate charm. He used to tell her she was with him to his comfort at Blair-Drummond, although in reality she was in London or Berkshire. Once with like fancy he told her she had been his Christmas guest at Blair-Drummond. But Elizabeth Montagu's self-command never faltered. She was every inch the Queen of the Blue-stockings.

But the letters reveal more than Elizabeth's charms. They give us a microscopic view of her life at the period. Constantly in ill-health, she suffered from neuralgia, (or so I interpret "pains in my teeth & jaws from a rheumatick humour") (Letter J) and from serious stomach trouble, sometimes called "spasms", sometimes "bilious cholick." This latter trouble as she explains to Kaimes, apologising for her long silences, was seriously aggravated by the stooping posture in writing necessitated by her short sight. She was constantly engrossed with business, with letter-writing in connection with her estates, with buying land and property, with the redecoration of her Sandleford house, and the building and decoration of the house at Portman Square. She recommended Mr. Adam for anything "in meubles extreamly beautifull" (Letter C) and wrote that all the celebrated artists of England of the present time had done something towards embellishing her house. (Letter X) In her salons, she told Kaimes, the Duchess of Gordon would "find many Persons whose conversation will be a great pleasure and improvement to a well turned mind, and she will never meet there anyone whose character can cast a dark shadow on those around it, tho I admire talents, I reverence virtues so much more, I have always avoided acquaintance with persons of bad, or even doubtfull character." (Letter J) She learned that the Professor of Poetry at Oxford, Dr. Warton, was about to write a history of Poetry. (Letter M) The death of Lord Lyttelton, 'cast a cloud over her mind.' (Letter Q) And her delight in conversation, was repeatedly affirmed. While she several times discussed the merits of town versus country, her heart was in the town: "It is happy for me that when the fine vision of the midsummer nights dream is over, there is a Winters tale told over the Social hearth that is, in its way, as engaging." (Letter K) "Towred Citties please us then and the busy humm of men," she quoted in another place. (Letter V) Of such were her pleasures and occupations and these refined pleasures are set against the dark background of the gambling of the day, when Bank Bills passed "from one fair hand to another at the Loo Table." (Letter J)

There are also accurate pointers to her character and personality, to her integrity, to her prudence in business, despite her vast wealth. She purchased a silver "epargne" for Mrs. Drummond (1) in London, but would not pay for it until it had arrived safely and until Lord Kaimes's silver-smith had weighed it, "lest there be any mistake." (Letter E) She gave expression to her sincere, typically eighteenth-century, orthodox Christianity with the stress on God as Creator rather than Redeemer. When children were under her care, "whenever they have admired the Suns refulgent beams, the lovely orb of the moon, or any striking beauties of the creation, I have endeavoured to raise their thoughts to the great Creator, and to set before them his Majesty without the terrors that might drive them from the contemplation." (Letter W) She moralised for pages. She displayed her eighteenth-century appreciation of nature, the moral ever to hand: "I am come, I am arrived, I am actually at Blair-Drummond. I am sitting by your Lordship on the seat you marked with my name; the river is falling over the pebbles or foaming among the Rocks, just as we human creatures are fretful and peevishly murmuring at the little impediments, or raging and storming at great obstacles that thwart us in the progress of life. I see Benloman lift his scornful brow frowning with proud disdain on the vainly emulating hills and humbly unaspiring vales beneath him, just emblem of human greatness, human power!" (Letter P) Finally and not least, she let her wit play: "I cannot so much as read politicians; I have been used only to read right forward, so the Hebrew text and the politicians mind are to me unintelligible." (Letter C)

(1) Mrs. Drummond retained her own name to secure her inheritance of her family estate at Blair Drummond. For a similar reason her son became Mr. Home-Drummond. The Kaimes estate was in Berwickshire.

LIST OF LETTERS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER
(arranged alphabetically)

- A. (1) 4th November, 1766. On the beauties of Blair Drummond, on Lord Kaimes's scheme for a winter-garden and on the question of ornamentation in decoration. Published with short omissions.
- B. 10th December, 1766. On the comparative pleasures of town and country. Published except for an introductory sentence explaining that Mrs. Montagu has not written because writing aggravates "complaints in the stomach"
- C. 11th February, 1767. On the happiness she feels in the friendship of Lord Kaimes, on the excellent taste of "Mr Adam," and on various other matters.
- D. 24th March, 1767. On Dr. Adam Fergusson's An Essay on the History of Civil Society, published in 1766. Published with several omissions. One long omission is given below.
- E. 9th May, 1767. On Mrs. Montagu's plans for inoculation, on Lord Kaimes's failure to reply to Mrs. Montagu's comments on ornamentation (see A) Tytler omits the former part of the letter and a sharp sentence on Lord Chatham (omissions which are given below); and with no indication of what he is doing other than asterisks and a dash, he adds the second part of letter G, which is on the relationship of authors and critics.
- F.^x 9th June, 1767.
- G. 2nd July, 1767. The first part of this letter, omitted in Tytler, deals with the payment of an "epargne" which Mrs. Montagu's silversmith made for Mrs. Drummond in London, refers casually to contemporary politics, and instructs Lord Kaimes how to direct letters to Mrs. Montagu. (See E)
- H. 30th July 1767. On Mrs. Montagu's respect for Lord Lyttelton's History of the Life of Henry the Second, on her plans for the summer, and various other matters. Published in full.
- I.^x 27th November, 1767.
- J.^x 30th [? (Winter) 1767-8.]
- K.^x 15th December, 1768.
- L.^x 7th April, 1769.

(1) Letters not published in Tytler's Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Henry Home of Kames are marked x

Square brackets indicate my datings.

- M.^x 9th February, 1771.
- N. 3rd October, 1771. On James Macpherson's Introduction to the History of Great Britain and Ireland or an Inquiry into the Origin, Religion, Manners, Governments, Courts of Justice etc. of the Ancient Britons (1771), and on the reception of Ossian, in England. Published with insignificant omissions.
- O.^x 25th July, [1772]
- P. 28th August, 1772. On the scenery at Blair Drummond, and the great changes in Scotland's social structure. The reference here to the disappearance of the clan-system in Scotland is of particular interest if put beside a passage on the same subject by Professor Trevelyan, (English Social History, 453-4). Published with short omissions.
- Q. 27th October, 1773. On the publication of Sketches of the History of Man and on Lord Lyttelton's death. Tytler omits the last page and a half of this letter (given below) in which Mrs. Montagu commends her nephew Morris Robinson, to Lord Kaimes, as he is entering the University of Edinburgh.
- R.^x 12th September, 1774.
- S.^x 7th May, 1776.
- T.^x 8th August, 1778.
- U.^x 30th August, 1778.
- V. 23rd August [1779] On the pleasures of mental activity, on the town versus the country, on the purchase of a new estate at Denton, and on the preparations in the Portman Square House. Published with minor omissions. (I have given the date 1779 as the letter obviously refers back to the visit of Lord Kaimes and Mrs. Drummond to Denton in August, 1778 [see T and U], and describes Mrs. Montagu's activities since that visit).
- W.^x [October, 1780]
- X.^x 30th December [1781]
- Y. 12th November, 1782. On Mr Drummond Home's bride, [See note to letter M], on religious education, on the attractions of living in a city. Published with short omissions, one on Mrs. Montagu's "spasms of the stomach," one is given below.
- This was the last letter from Mrs. Montagu. Lord Kaimes died 27th December, 1782.

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS AND OMISSIONS FROM PUBLISHED LETTERS.

Commission from Letter D (24th March 1767)

"I am sorry to say, that tho Man is capable of many & various excellencies, there are few that can coexist in the highest degree in one individual, & it is the same thing in Societies. In the state of Childhood, there are a thousand simple genuine graces, its sports are innocent, its quarrels void of malice and treachery, it recommends itself to our affections, but our judgment pronounces it has not attain'd to the perfections of humanity. See the human animal in his adolescence, the fervent spirit, the uncheck'd vigour of soul, contempt of gain, aversion to deceit, & qualities great tho undisciplined please us, but as a social being is not to be judg'd of till you see his use and fitness to the social system, you own this is but the beginnings of a man, & you wait his further progress before you grant him your entire esteem. When he has been form'd by institutions, instructed by Science, embellish'd by arts, as one may say, systematized, & made suitable to the peculiarities of his Country & his condition of life, when he is fit for councils or enterprizes, to be Soldier, Statesman, or philosopher, then we hope we may pronounce him perfect. But alas! where then is the innocence of his Childhood? Where the ardor, the ingenious spirit of his youthfull days? Experience has intimidated him, He is effeminated, he is taught to employ cunning to gain his ends, & fraud to obtain wealth. He has a thousand artificial wants & weaknesses. He reasons like an Angel, and acts like a Brute, becomes sensual as he grows intellectual, refines in doctrine, & degenerates in action. Thus it is with the individual, & thus with Societies. Can we esteem our Savage Ancestors, the first Tyrants of the Woods? or love our present Brethren in Change Alley? Do we reverence the unpolicied Hord of Tartars or the too political Conclave of Cardinals? Man is great in various situations, perfect in none, At Athens wise & ingenious at Lacedaemon intrepid & firm."

Note. Mrs. Montagu's observations are not very different from these of Rousseau and Wordsworth, but her reasoning is very different.

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Omissions from letter E (9th May, 1767).

"I have taken a house at Kensington in order to be inoculated, for inoculation is now so general, that infection is spread every where, & the great Operator in this way, Mr. Sutton, lets his Patients go out with the distemper upon them, so that they even appear in the Park and publick places, to the great terror of those in my circumstances. Our Stewards wife at Denton too is ill of the smallpox, & people are inoculating in this Neighbourhood, so to avoid greater danger, I incur the leper. Very few of Suttons Patients have died, his success is astonishing. I shall put myself into his hands in about a week, the preparation takes up about ten days. I think your Lordship should write to me during my confinement, and you shall hear from me as soon as it is over, I had much rather you should learn the event from me, than from the news papers, even tho some of my Poetical friends should honour my memory with a fine Elegy."

"I suppose you hear Lord Chatham is totally unfit for business. It is pity the good people of England did not find it out long ago, the symptoms are only a little aggravated."

F

June ye 9th 1767

Let not your mind or your stomach be troubled my good Lord, the smallpox disdains me. I have been twice inoculated by the famous Mr. Sutton within this fortnight, & without effect. I was inoculated 20 years ago and served in ye same manner, so I must have had ye distemper in my infancy. I am mighty glad I have escaped death, elegies, Epitaphs etc. they are things too serious & too fine for me. I am so hurried with answering congratulatory compliments, & writing to my friends at a distance to tell ye event⁽¹⁾ of this undertaking that I cannot now answer yr Lordships letter with ye attention it deserves. I beg my best respects to Mrs. Drummond. I am my Lord with great regard yr Lordships
 most Obliged
 & Obed^t & faithfull etc.
 E. Montagu

Note Mrs. Montagu shared the common eighteenth century fear of smallpox, a not unreasonable fear. It was Lady Mary Wortley Montagu who successfully introduced inoculation into England from Turkey, after her return from there in 1718. The method of inoculation was extraordinarily clumsy and seems especially so, contrasted with the simple method of modern vaccination, and of course inoculation was accompanied by the inevitable 'bleeding' of the day; but it checked the unbridled ravages of the disease. Mrs. Montagu had been inoculated in 1743 just after her child was born so that she could nurse him herself if he took the disease.

The absence of the customary 'My Lord' indicates the haste in which the letter was written.

(1) 'Event' is used here in the older and radical sense of the word to indicate the outcome or issue of the occurrence rather than the occurrence itself.

I

My Lord

Hillstreet ye 27th of Nov
1767

I found your Lordships letter in Hillstreet at my arrival from the North. I pass'd some time in Yorkshire, & my servants not knowing the time I should stay there, kept my letters waiting here. I was prevented leaving Northumberland so soon as I had intended by a full week, being confined to my room by a Rash. I cannot express to you how much I wish'd for the honour of seeing your Lordship, Mrs. Drummond, & your family, at Denton, & nothing but the apprehension of a winters journey in a weak state of health could have driven me away before I had that pleasure. It makes me some amends, that you flatter me with the hopes of seeing your Son in London this winter. His prudence & good sense will I dare say make his Travels usefull to him. In general, I do not find our young people much improved by going abroad. The levity belonging to youth makes some of them admire everything that is new to them, The moroseness & inflexibility peculiar to our Countrymen, makes those of a graver character, as unreasonably despise the modes & manners of other Nations. A young Gentleman so informed as Mr. Home will judge of what he sees with candor & adopt the fashions with prudence. The advantages & disadvantages of Foreign Travel have been often well argued, but when one can consult experience I should prefer it to reasoning on all subjects, & I am sorry to say, experience decides against this general practise of sending our youth abroad. I think the disposition of the Individual should a good deal determine the Route appointed. If the love of dissipation was the vice of the disposition I should not send a young Person to Paris; If a love of the effeminate arts predominated I should desire him to avoid Italy. The air of Holland is bad, & the Dutch are a disagreeable people. The Hague, as it contains the Ambassadors of many Nations, is more agreeable & polite than the Commercial Towns. Some of the Provincial Towns in France are very agreeable, & as young persons can hardly be very intimately received into the most polite Cotteries in Paris, or the most ingenious Societies, perhaps travelling from Place to Place, & taking a superficial view of the beauties of Nature, the outward forms of the police, & the external manners of the people, is all that should be aimed at; & even this informs the mind & polishes the manners, & wears off that insularity, if I may be allow'd the expression that is apt to distinguish the English Gentleman, but of this you have less than we, for you are more on the great Continent of address & manners. Upon considering what your Lordship has said of the Kings Coach, tho it be perfectly just, it may possibly give offence if named, therefore I hope you will excuse me, if I say, I should think it better only to observe that the Marine animals are not proper upon a Coach or Chariot. I am apt to think a peculiar direction concerning ornaments is of less dignity than the rest of the work. Your fine

ork will teach Writers those things that are of general use,
 I think your Lordship condescends too much, if you give any
 special direction to artists I had rather Barges were supported
 by Oxen, & Coaches by Crocodiles, than so fine a performance
 were any way debased. Directions concerning dress I can
 hardly think suitable to the work, & for Architechure, it
 should be left to Architects. I have look'd over my letter,
 I think there is not anything in it that can properly be
 introduced, & what your Lordship has done me the honour to
 dopt, is not serious enough for the Elements of Criticism.
 What your Lordship has said in the paper you sent me is very
 just, & what you would do kindly in intimating to a friend
 who was adorning his House, but I think it is not of that
 weight & quality of the rest of the book, I must confess I
 think little can be done for the improvement of taste by any
 special direction, There is publick spirit in the attempt, but
 to make ineffectual efforts & apply inadequate remedies will
 not gain that merit a laudable intention deserves. I am
 extremely delicate for the Fame of my Friends, & love to see
 genius employ'd on subjects of a noble kind. Improve taste
 in Poetry & eloquence, the Arts, handmaids of the Musés, will
 receive their advantage, as handmaids shd receive it, from
 the elegance of their Mistresses. Pray let me hear from
 you soon and that you forgive my long silence, a great deal
 of business & little health has made me a bad correspondent
 but not the less sincere & zealous friend. I have not
 enclosed my letter upon ornament because I think it hardly
 worth loading ye post for it, but as your Lordships property
 did not burn it & so it is always at yr commands. My
 most affectionate respects attend Mrs. Drummond & I beg to
 be honour'd with ye commission if she wants anything this
 great City can furnish. I shall long to see Mr. Home, &
 to give him letters for any of my Acquaintance to whatsoever
 and he shall travel. With great respect I am my Lord

Your Lordships

Most Obliged & Faithfull Hble Serv
 Eliz: Montagu

note. In dealing both with the question of foreign travel
 and with that of ornamentation in this letter, Mrs. Montagu
 reveals the decisiveness of her opinions. Lord Kaimes
 consulted her about material for an augmented edition of
 the Elements of Criticism (first published in 1762) and had
 evidently sent a paper for her to criticise. He inserted
 part of the returned letter here referred to, somewhat
 revised, in a note to later editions. Mrs. Montagu's
 comments on ornamentation are amusing in a naïve way. She
 had a childlike sense of what was fitting in decoration. A
 similar idea to the one expressed here on the ornamentation of
 marriages, is expressed in an earlier letter (4th November
 1766), about the feet of tables and chairs: "The feet of a
 table or chair should express steadiness & firmness. A
 law, whether of Lion or Eagle, is absurd, as the business
 of it, is not to snatch or tear, but to support."
 Tytler, II, 39-40)

My dear Lord

ye 30

Do I remember your Lordships leading Miss Maxwell⁽¹⁾ up to me? Yes. Who could ever lose the impression of beauty conducted by wisdom? Your Lordship might safely answer for my thinking the Society of the amiable Duchess of Gordon a great happiness & honour, & I shall present myself at her door this very evening. I did not presume to do it on my slender acquaintance, but on your Lordships recommendation, I shall imagine myself acceptable. I had the pleasure of seeing the Duchess of Gordon at a great publick assembly on thursday evening; she recollected me, in a very obliging manner, address'd herself to me, & enquired when I had heard from your Lordship, & we indulged ourselves in talking of you & Mrs. Drummond. The Duchess of Gordons good sense will direct her much better than I can do, I cannot flatter myself with being of use to her Grace in any respect but this, She will find at my House many Persons whose conversation will be a great pleasure & improvement to a well turned mind, & she will never meet there any one whose character can cast a dark shade on those around it, tho I admire talents, I reverence virtues so much more, I have always avoid'd acquaintance with persons of bad, or even doubtfull character. Your Lordships caution against playing cards was well timed in an age when one sees Bank bills passing from one fair hand to another at the Loo table, I have been sorry to see such sums circulating round the table when youth, beauty, & innocence formd the circle. It is not necessary to play at cards at all in Town, as some few persons of great rank & figure never play at all, I own there are but few of these & it requires some courage to withstand a prevalent mode, but the higher the rank, the more the Person has a power to chuse their modes of amusement. There cannot be a more harmless amusement than low play if you consider it with regard to fortune. I have entirely withstood the fashion of playing at cards because I love conversation better, very often I should pass my time as agreeably in low play as in uninteresting & unimproving conversation, but once entered a card player, all other social amusements must be too much sacrificed to it, & with Persons of sense & virtue, there is much to be learnt at such times & opportunities as one can get them to engage in conversation.

(1) Jane Maxwell, the second and loveliest of the daughters of Sir William Maxwell, often knows as "Jenny of Monreith" was married to Alexander, Duke of Gordon, 28th October, 1767.

I had a great deal of pleasure in the company of Mr. Hume⁽¹⁾ while he staid in Town, he seemd desirous to set out on his Travels; & like Ulysses, w^d not be delay'd by the Sirens, who I believe have as alluring tones in this Town, to the ear of a young man, as in any Capital City whatever. The greater delicacy affected at Paris is less agreeable to very young people than the manners of their own Country. I dont know whether I should own to you, that having made parties for dinner for three or four days, I tryd to make him disobey yr instructions & stay with us, but I could not prevail. He had got from Mr. David Hume better recommendations than I could give him to Caen. I may be more usefull in this way when he goes to some other place Caen is considerd merely as an Academy, I believe nothing could be more easy than to find a Fair Bride for a Gentleman of Mr. Humes great merit & great Fortune, but I w^d advise him to marry a Lady of his own Country. Woman is a kind of plant that does not well bear transplanting into another soil & climate, Little minds are attachd to little things, our Ladies are tenacious of their own habits, & conceited of their own customs. An English Dame marryed into Scotland, w^d very probably, be as awkward & as troublesome, as a City Heiress married to one of our considerable Country Gentlemen. His Pedigree, his Arms, his Manors, his extensive estate & long hereditary consideration, w^d not counterbalance in her mind, perhaps, the Turtle feast, the rich apparel, the massy plate & ye clumsy magnificence of a very opulent state. Your Lordship will understand what I mean, & will confess I have not been too partial to my Sex or Country in my comparisons. I must now make apology for not having written to yr Lordship in so long a time. I have been sadly tormented with pains in my teeth & jaws from a rheumatick humour, stooping my head to write affects me terribly, so that I have restrain'd my self from writing any thing but letters of business, & of which I have so many to write as keeps this disorder continually irritated, I was much concern'd to hear Mrs. Drummond had been so ill, but hopeher health will be well

(1) In the letter of 27th November, 1767, Mrs. Montagu anticipating a visit from Lord Kaimes's Son, referred to him as Mr. Home. In this letter after she had met Mr. Home, she referred to him as Mr. Hume. An Englishwoman, she spelt the name as she heard it pronounced. In an article on these Montagu - Kaimes letters in The Scotsman (23rd Nov, 1946) Mr. W. Forbes Gray showed that he was thus misled into thinking that Mrs. Montagu was displaying an interest in the philosopher David Hume; but it is quite clear that ~~Mrs. Montagu~~ this was not so. The reference is to a young man setting out on the Grand Tour in the winter of 1767-8. David Hume was by that time a middle aged man (he was born in 1711), and in any case he spent that particular winter in London. Also, there is a specific reference to David Hume, the philosopher.

establish'd. Sometimes a severe illness clears the constitution. My most affectionate respects & best wishes attend her.

With great regard

I am my Lord

Your Lordships most Obedt

Most Obliged Hble Servt

E Montagu

I deliverd yr Lordships criticism to ~~Dr~~ Lyttelton, & he gave me a long message, & wd perswade us that S does not hiss because the letter often occurs (as he tells me) in ye latin tongue, I am sure S hisses like a Serpent on ye banks of ye Thames, & I believe it didso on ye Tiber. x

Note. It will be clear from the letter itself and from ⁿ² that this letter was written from London (almost certainly from Hillstreet) in the winter of 1767-8. I should be inclined to date it February or March 1768, since the letter of 27th November, 1767, anticipates Mr. Home's visit and when this letter was written the visit had taken place at least some little ^{time} previously. It is not likely that Mr Home would set out on the Grand Tour in December.

My Lord

Hillstreet Dec ye 15th
1768

I am afraid, your Lordship may have attributed to indolence, that remissness in my correspondence which is owing to a rheumatick disorder in my face. In damp weather, I feel immediately the bad effects of stooping down my head to write; & I am so short sighted that I cannot do it in an erect posture. The rainy Season of late was very unfavorable to this complaint, but I hope the frost will in some measure repair the mischief of the moist weather. I came to London on the first of November, the latest day that I ever wish to be in the Country. It is happy for me, that when the fine vision of the midsummer nights dream is over, there is a Winters tale told over the Social hearth that is, in its way, as engaging. I own it is less spiritual, less sublime: but tho more vulgar, homely, & prosaick, it is so stuffed out with reality, & lined with matter of fact, as not to be less interesting. In the moonlight walk, I converse with Angels & spiritual Beings; at my fireside I chatt with my Friends upon the things of this World, & the responses are best made by equal to equal. The mind in the unlimited greatness of solitude like Master Stevens amidst his Wealth, is apt to grow very proud and very melancholly; by contemplating on the vanity of human life it becomes scornfull & sad; our duty is to be humble, & our interest is to be merry. We are told much of a Weeping as well as a laughing Philosopher, I dare say Heraclitus lived in the Country, Democritus in a city. It is the common Charter of all Citties to give its inhabitants the freedom to laugh at folly, in the Country, it is always the custom of the Manor to lament at it. The censoriousness that waits upon wisdom, when she is an inactive Spectator, makes her often an unamiable companion. If I had not been within ten miles of Brentford, how I should have wonderd at & blamed the good Candidate who carried all the Ruffians of St. Giles's, & all the boxers & prize fighters of London & Westminster, in order to keep peace and good order at an election! & yet that is really the fact; but the Generals of these noble corps, not being good peace officers, did by some mistake much belabour friend and foe: If your Lordship receives the account of such proceedings in your abstracted state at Blair Drummond you will be hurt at the folly of it, if you are in your Capital City, you will laugh heartily, however it has one serious side even to those not disposed to be serious, & who see daily enough of the strange Creature man not to be amazed at any thing he does; the serious part is this, blunders & indiscretions of our Governors bring Government into contempt. Jealousies are created where there should be mutual confidence. You will see accounts in the papers of barbarous & bloody murders done at this election, fat geese, plump turkies, & well fed fowl were slain for ye feasting, but of the two

legged animal without feathers none were kill'd, nor do I find, on enquiry, that any were dangerously wounded. Mr. Wilkes's affair⁽¹⁾ is not to be decided till after the Holydays, so desirous is our wise and able Ministry to prolong the bustle & augment the consequence of John Wilkes Esqr. If I lived remote from Citties & Men I should wonder at this & grieve at it. I am impatient to receive the work your Lordship promised me, you have got the Muses all on your side the Tweed. I do not hear of any new work coming out this Winter in South Brittain. I hope your Lordship has enjoy'd yr health in spite of ye cold & wet Summer. Mr. Montagu was much recovered, but since the frost he has a little return of his cough. I hope however it will not be so severe as last winter. How goes on your Winter garden at Blair Drummond? If to your ever greens you could add the ever sunshine I should still admire it more. Alas! how difficult even if the objects of delight could be made permanent would it be to render the pleasure they give so. The Tree of pleasure I fear is of the class of the Deciduous leaf, nor do these always spring again after short intervals. I beg my best respects to Mrs. Drummond & if there is anything I can do for her here the commission will give me great pleasure. With the greatest regard I am my Lord

Your Lordships most Obedient
and most faithfull Hble Servant
Eliz Montagu

Note. This letter might be called a miniature picture of Mrs. Montagu's correspondence with Lord Kaimes, for it is characteristic of the whole, and characteristically, it lacks arrangement. Here are her ill health, her sociability and love of the town, a vivid and not unamusing reference to a topical event (an Election fight), a disillusioned reference to politics, a touch of cynicism, a touch of flattery, a little not unpleasant moralising, and much sound good sense.

(1) Wilkes's affair. The reference is not of course to the original libel charge in 1763, but to the uproar caused in 1768 when Wilkes, an outlaw, stood as parliamentary candidate for Middlesex. We are not surprised at Mrs. Montagu's attitude to "John Wilkes Esqr."

My Lord

April ye 7th 1769

I am ashamed to think how long I have delay'd returning thanks for your Lordships most acceptable & valuable present.⁽¹⁾ I was extreemly ill when I received it; the first use I made of returning spirits was to read; possessed of a work of your Lordships, one cannot lay down the book to take up ones pen; that would be indeed to write in spite of Minerva, an affront would be offerd to the Goddess of Wisdom in her very presence, & without any temptation, the pleasure being all on the other side. I had read the elements of Criticism thrice before, but read them ye fourth time with still greater pleasure; I was glad to find your Lordship had more develop'd your scheme in some parts where I wish'd it to be done, that I might be sure I did not substitute any conjecture of my own, in place of your deep & accurate judgment. The generality of Writers in Criticism only form Criticks, your Lordship by your admirable investigation of causes will form writers. I admire the spirit which dictated what you have written for improving the Military branch of the Brittish Constitution. I am not a judge whether the difficulties it would find from many things in our Constitution would be insuperable so with them I shall not concern myself. Hero's of old cou'd make their swords into ploughshares & the Conqueror & Dictator wd return to his plough till his paternal acres were in danger of being invaded but things are strangely altered. An artificial state of things seems to have got the better of the natural. A Man now values himself not upon being a Man, an European not a Barbarian, a free man in a free state not a slave under a despot but men have formed themselves into certain classes & Corps & esteem only what is relative to that body into which they are incorporated. Prove they are deserters & have abandon'd the standard under which they enlisted & they are ashamed & confounded but concerning the more enlarged duties of a Man they are not thus punctilious. The Merchant does not desire that you should think he wd dye in defense of a Fort, the officer cares not whether you believe him exact & punctual in matters of property. The Physician desires to be thought a man of letters, but the Sailor cares not if you laugh at him for his ignorance. Yet courage justice & probity & knowledge must combine to make a man, that is such a Creature as deserves to be esteem'd the most perfect animal in the creation. Now I fear if you take away these exclusive corporation laws & present the Magna Charta of humanity you will leave the Creatures at liberty to resort to the great standard which Mammon holds up to Mankind. You indeed endeavour to provide against this by encouragements to serve without

(1) This was the fourth edition of "The Elements of Criticism" published in 1769.

pay, but few wd be on that establishment, & if the Military were not a Mans sole profession he might retreat to some other field of glory when the Trumpet calld to arms. It would not be uncommon perhaps for one who had been partly an officer to retire when the Army took ye Field to write a treatise upon Agriculture, his Subaltern wd quit the Colours to measure lutestring in a Mercers Shop. As things are the spirit of the Corps to which a man belongs animates all his movements. We hear nothing of those idle panicks which seizing an individual spread by degrees its contagion. Every man now is 10,000 men. No one is actuated by caprice, or by his particular sentiments or feelings; he is not John or Thomas; he is an officer, he is of such a Regiment & tho ye man John is in a fright, Capt John fights like Alexander. In spite of all that our Patriots have advanced in favour of a Militia, I fear that its regulations are very unfavorable to ye innocence, ye simplicity the patient industry & sober sequestration of a day labourer who sh^d be temperate, frugal, & patiently perform his Solitary task. I do not find any thing at all a match in this age for avarice but the ambition of making a figure in a particular profession. He that betrays the general duties of humanity for pelf is only a rogue, he that betrays that of his profession for it is a scoundrel. The Rogue has his Friends & even his admirers, but the scoundrel has still but a bad time of it in the World. I wish with you that honorary rewards were more in vogue. Nothing seems to me more terrible than a Mans being always obliged to be a Soldier because in a drunken frolick or angry with his mistress he once enlisted, & yet, if one considers how unfit these poor fellows are renderd for either Manufactures or Agriculture after ye idleness & dissipation of a military life, I know not whether more misery wd not be occasion'd by another regulation. I have been talking nonsense all this while on purpose to draw you on to send me more of yr scheme, for contradiction is more apt to prolong discourse than smooth assent. Your Lordship seems sensible that ye filthiest & foulest Demon of ye Pandemonium Mammon has possess'd himself of ye bulk of mankind, & indeed thence arises all we feel or fear of evil. I had the mortification to hear that Mr. Heron call'd here one morning when I was not at home, I regretted my not having the pleasure of seeing him but have sent a card to beg the favour of his company to-morrow evening. Many reports are current concerning a change of Ministry, but I believe nothing is settled as to that point. My best respects attend Mrs. Drummond. With great esteem

I am my Lord

Yr Lordships

Most Obliged & Obed^t

Hble Serv^t

E Montagu

Note Mrs. Montagu is "thinking aloud" rather than thinking clearly in this letter; but it is interesting to see her awareness of the beginnings of specialisation and regimentation, processes hastened beyond Mrs. Montagu's imagining by the rapid progress of the Industrial Revolution. She anticipates the danger of specialisation, particularly the danger to the full and free development of the whole man; and she sees that regimentation involves the loss of individuality. The scorn of Mammon is characteristic. The statement that "ye filthiest & ye foulest Demon of ye Pandemonium Mammon has possess'd himself of ye bulk of mankind, & indeed hence arises all we feel or fear of evil" is merely an elaborate way of stating St. Paul's "The love of money is the root of all evil." But we hardly appreciate scorn of this kind from such a wealthy woman as Mrs. Montagu.

My Lord

Feb ye 9th 1771

I can by no means wish, that your Lordship may be well enough acquainted with ill health, to make allowance for all the faults it occasions. The Hours of your Lordships life, like those harness'd by Guido to Aurora's car smiling lead on the day; & at each step scatter fruit & flowers, as they pass. The Hours of an Invalid pace slow & heavily, leaning on the barren leafless staff of indolence & idleness: in the morning they are languid, in the evening weary, & even at noon inactive. I have suffer'd much illness since I saw your Lordship & Mrs. Drummond.⁽¹⁾ It will be a pleasure to you both to know, that when my infirm person was confined to a great Chair, my imagination, mounting on the wings of memory, brought me back to Blair Drummond, repeated to me all you read, & all you talk'd to me, & sooth'd me with the kind, the friendly, & polite hospitality of Mrs. Drummond. I do not know whether these recollections in absence are not almost as pleasing tho' not so gay as our enjoyments of our present friends. Reflection like the Moon shadowy sets off the face of things! In this mind of twilight all objects are soften'd, & they are endear'd by the effort we make to perceive them, & appear more precious than when they spontaneously discover'd themselves, & so wanted that price which we set on whatever must be obtain'd by difficulty, & gain'd by effort. Tho I have most haunted your library, I have sometimes taken a turn in your winter garden. I hope you have compleated that pretty design. But why do I fancy it is compleated, when there is one important article unprovided. Your Lordship has no Grandchildren, & upon my word they are the best ornaments of a Winter garden. They enliven the Winter of the year, & the Winter of life. I long to hear that Mr. Home is going to take a fair & lovely Bride.⁽²⁾ I wish I could send you any agreeable news from this part of the World, but I think the Town is rather dull, actively, not passively dull. There is an insipid round of frivolous amusements in which the old lose their dignity, the young dissipate their natural vivacity. There is to be a fine Masquerade on Monday. I shall go to some of the Houses of my Friends who see Masks, but I shall never again take the trouble of a Masquerade dress. The political World is quareling about the Convention the gay World about a Musick meeting. I hear great commendations of Mr. Dalrymples Work

(1) Mrs. Montagu visited Scotland for the second time in 1770, in company with Mrs. Chapone. She had previously visited at Blair Drummond in 1766.

(2) Mr. George Home-Drummond (he had to take his mother's name to inherit her estate) married Janet Jardine, daughter of the Rev. John Jardine, D.D. an Edinburgh minister in 1782.

from Persons who have seen part of it. I believe you will be entertained by a book the Professor of Poetry at Oxford is preparing for the Press, it is the history of Poetry in England.⁽¹⁾ We shall not find an Ossian⁽²⁾ among our Bards, but I presume the work will be interesting as it will give us better ideas of the ancient manners than we get from our old Historians. We shall be able to trace the improvements in civility, in arts, & literature, & I am apt to believe from the oldest french Romances being all composed of Brittish Heroes, that we shall find we had the precedence of the french in the Belles lettres as to time; I am sure we have great superiority over them in merit. Chaucer, Spencer, Shakespear, Milton, Dryden, & Pope are far superior to any of their Poets. I hope your Lordship will have the goodness to write to me soon. I thank God I am now so much recover'd that I flatter myself I shall not be again such a poor Invalid. Pray tell me how your noble work goes on. Say for me to Mrs. Drummond every thing that can express respect, & affection, warmd with gratitude, for all her goodness to me. I have presumed so much on your Lordships affection for your friend hiding the faults of the Author that I have pack'd up my poor Essay on Shakespear with a sort of inscription to you. I shall send it by ye Edinburg⁽³⁾ Carrier the middle of next week. Dr. Gregory will convey it to your hands. I shall also send one also to Mrs. Drummond. I fancy she loves me, & if the proverb says love me love me love my dog, surely love me love my book, & mine is no snarling criticism. Many an ungently reader when the Author was unknown, may have said, this Writer is a puppy, if that shd have been yr case still by virtue of ye proverb I claim Mrs. Drummonds partiality for ye book. I hope your Lordship & Mrs. Drummond are at Edinburgh this cold season. Your Mountains must look beautiful glittering with frost but the ingenious & polite society at Edinburgh must make cold days & long evenings pass more agreeably than I can think of without envy. You have no Coterie Ladies, no Maccaroni Beaux. If I had wings I should often take a flight to Edinburgh so much have I always been delighted with the Society there. I remember with great gratitude all the favours I have received in Scotland & hope the Summer after ye next if I live so long to make it another visit, & that I shall stay then much longer at Blair Drummond. I am my Lord with great regard

Your Lordships

Most Obliged & most Obed^t

Hble Serv^t

Eliz Montagu

(1) Thomas Warton. The first volume of his history of English poetry appeared in 1774.

(2) The Bluestockings were very interested in the supposed Ossianic poetry. They celebrated regularly the feast of shells mentioned there, drinking out of a nautilus to the immortal memory of Ossian. James Macpherson himself was present on one such occasion. (Chimenson I, 268)

(3) This may be meant for Edinburgh, as the word is squeezed in at the end of a line and Edinburgh occurs later on the same page of the letter; but there is no sign of an h in the MS.

My Lord

Sandleford ye 25 july

It is not as a figure of speech, that I say your Lordships letter delighted me beyond expression: much was I delighted, & little could I express it, not only from the imperfection of language, which is a human invention & must be inadequate to thought, which is a divine gift, but various other impediments were in my way when I intended to answer you. I had a great disorder in my eyes for a long time, & my health is so delicate, that I am obliged to great menagemens. I could not think of writing your Lordship a short letter, & few are the days in which I have health, leisure & strength of eyesight to write a long one. I am so perfectly convinced of the truth of what your Lordship has supposed to be the reason why the earliest Compositions of all kinds were in verse, that I have nothing to object or add to it. I will only say, that it gives me an impatience to see your great work⁽¹⁾ finish'd. I am convinced it will be a rich treasure of valuable things which either have not yet been discover'd, or have been obliterated, for it is the great business of Genius & to invent & to retrieve. It is the frequent boast of the Moderns, that they know many things that the Ancients were ignorant of; this is very true, but, I fear, they are ignorant of many things which the Ancients knew, I never reflect upon our Druid universities that I do not regret that we are so little inform'd of its Doctrines & Discipline. I should suppose, that Natural History was well understood, especially what most related to the common uses of life, the virtues of plants, the qualities of the animal creation, the cultivation & use of the one, the management of the other. When the students in any art are taught viva voce by the Professors, the most useful things will be chiefly inculcated: the appeal for the truth of what was taught must be made to the living & existing subject, not to the dead letter of Authority. The Druids had not their Aristotle or Plato, to whom to appeal, Truth had only Experience for her Friend, & Experience is her constant friend, & as invariably the Enemy of falsehood. The moral Doctrines of the Druids seem to have been very pure tho harsh & severe. Their Religion pure Deism, but they govern'd by an Hierarchy very tyrannical & imposing. Your Lordship seem'd to promise to give an account of the manners of your Countrymen at the time Ossian wrote his Poems. I fear you would find but little assistance From any annals of an age when everything was trusted to memory. However the Songs of your Bards have been the happy means of conveying some facts, & a picture of manners, & your Lordships sagacity & penetration will advance happily where ordinary genius would be lost & bewildered. Pray have you

(1) Sketches of the History of Man (1774)

seen Mr. Jones's translations or imitations of some Asiatick Poetry?(1) Mr. Jones has a surprizing faculty of learning languages, & is the best Orientalist we have, & he has^a great talent for versification. I wish he had follow'd the Original Poems more closely, for I own I should have had more pleasure in their peculiarity than their perfection. I want to know how an Asiatick expresses himself, & what are his feelings. Mr. Jones has in some degree preserved the Asiatick Character, there is a luxiance of description, a warmth & tenderness of heart beyond what we find in our Poets. I think there is great taste & ingenuity in the two Prose Essays which accompany this work. I hope your Lordship will not punish my offences by a long silence but will bestow a few lines upon me when you have leisure. I do not know whether I told you that I had, some time ago, the pleasure of a long conversation with Lord Mansfield about you, he loves & honours Lord Kaimes. I hope your Lordship & Mrs. Drummond have enjoy'd a good share of this fine summer in the lovely scenes of Blair Drummond. I often transport myself thither in imagination, perhaps next Summer I am may come in Person, in the meantime I am with you in mind. My best compliments attend Mrs. Drummond & Mr. Hume. I am with most perfect esteem

my Lord

Your Lordships

Most Obliged & Affectte Hble Serv^t
Eliz Montagu

Note. This letter was obviously written between the date of the publication of Sir William Jones's book in 1772 and the publication of Sketches of the History of Man in 1774. Mrs. Montagu was at Sandleford in the latter part of July, 1772 and again in July 1773; but I choose the earlier date for two reasons. Mrs. Montagu speaks of visiting Blair Drummond the following Summer in this letter, and she does so again in the letter of August 28th 1772 (The visit however did not take place). Secondly there is an implication that Mr. Jones's book was just published; and we know from her other correspondence that Mrs. Montagu was one of the first people to receive new books.

(1) Poems, consisting chiefly of translations from the Asiatick Languages, with two Essays on the Poetry of the Eastern Nations, and on the arts called Imitative was published by Sir William Jones, the oriental scholar, in 1772.

Omission from Letter Q.

"I intended writing to your Lordship if I had not had the favour of a letter from you, being very ambitious to recommend to your acquaintance & protection a Nephew of mine, (1) who is just now on the Road to Edinburgh; indeed I believe arrived there. He is (I think) worthy of your notice a boy of fine parts & excellent disposition. We thought he would derive greater advantages from the University at Edinburgh, where there are Professors of such distinguish'd talents, than from continuance at Eton. My eldest Brother not having any children he will be the Heir of my Fathers Estate, & I hope will do it honour. He is the eldest son of my second Brother. We wishd to have placed him with Dr. Blair (2) who would have made every hour of his life a time of improvement, but the Doctor will not take the charge of a young Person in his House, but is so good as to promise to attend to him. He is at present at Mr. Gregorys. He is very bashful, & will appear to disadvantage at first sight. He is but sixteen, & therefore you may suppose I do not mean that your Lordship should be troubled with much of his company; but it will do him great honour if you show he is not quite unknown to you. He is a very pretty Poet, & has a great deal of taste, but what is best of all is, that he is perfectly sober & regular, & has an excellent heart. I beg of you to introduce him to Mrs. Drummond, her goodness to the Aunt makes me hope the Nephew will not be unacceptable to her."

(1) This was Morris Robinson.

(2) Dr. Hugh Blair, an intimate friend of Lord Kaimes, was Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the University of Edinburgh from 1762-1783.

R

My Lord

Sandleford Sept ye 12th 1774

To say of what is excellent that it gives us inexpressible pleasure is no uncommon phrase; but with respect to your great Work,⁽¹⁾ I must use it not as an ordinary mode of speech, but as peculiarly adapted to the case, & I delayd writing because the pleasure I had received from it was inexpressible. I wish'd to enter upon the sketches of the History of Man with the airs & sufficiency of a Connoisseur, but the sketches of a Raphael could not be critically judged but by a Correggio. As well might I have sent up a paper Kite after the Eagle, in hopes it wd overtake the Bird of Jove as he skims along the Regions of day, as have hoped any comments of mine would have come even & level with you in any chapter of your book. But this reflection I made continually, How it happend that so much reading had not in some degree impaired the talent of the original thinking! or that such powers of original thinking had not mitigated the love of reading! I am much pleased with what you have said of the fair sex,⁽²⁾ you have spoken the sentiments of a Friend, & not the language of flattery or scorn. I received the valuable present of your Lordships work just as I was preparing for Tunbridge, I could not bear to sit down to it while I was every moment interrupted by company or business, my journey was put off by bad weather, then I had a little respite & leisure, & I read it with great delight. I took it to Tunbridge to read again, I fell ill there, & was obliged to return to Town for advice of my Physician. I staid a week in London & had the pleasure of talking with many Person of learning and taste who much admired it. At my return to Tunbridge, I read your work a second time, with still greater pleasure, & brought it hither to read^{it} a third time. I had determined to write to your Lordship before I had the kind favour of your letter, & tho I could not articulate my gratitude and my pleasure, on the merits of your work, still to assure your Lordship that words were all that were deficient on the occasion. I hope you do not design to sleep under the shade of your Laurels, but that you will still go on to write. You would be the more inexcusable because you can gather additional fame everywhere. The desert, the Populous City, antient Laws, new customs, those things that are past, & the most recent establishments, all equally productive of glory to you. I will own there are some parts of your work upon which I wish I could confer with you. The more I consider the great Animal whose History your Lordship so well delineates, the more I think an express

(1) Sketches of the History of Man (1774)

(2) Kaines devoted a chapter of Book I (Progress of Men as Individuals) to the Progress of the Female Sex

(Vol I, 168-219)

Revelation of the Will of God necessary for him; & I am the more sensible how suitable the Laws of the Gospel are to keep him in order, (1) how they are adapted to his Nature, & the various situations he is placed in. That never Man ^{as he spoke} whose precepts are contain'd in the sacred book. Socrates was good, Plato was wise, Epicurus was witty & elegant, but the doctrine of Philosophers was only for Philosophers, strutted with dignity in the Portico, & saunterd with ease & grace in the Gardens. But Man in general is not a Philosopher, human life is not a school or University nor a garden of sweets. Your work by making me better acquainted with the History of Man, his properties, his duties, his propensities, & his interests, has made me a better Christian, & I am therefore very much upon the watch least any thing in it sh^d be misconstrued. I was going to write to your Lordship two days before I had the kind favour of your letter, but was prevented by company calling in just as I took my pen into my hand. I was made very happy and yet ashamed by your letter. I had great expectation of being in Northumberland where I flatterd myself your Lordship would call upon me. It is only within these few days that the intention of a Northern journey has been laid aside. The bad weather, coming so early in the year, made Mr. Montagu determine to spend the remains of the Summer here. I have always a diffidence about troubling your Lordship with my letters, Your time is too valuable to be so squanderd & my health is often so bad I am unable to write. I have now a great share of health Your Lordship has an immense stock of Fame upon hand, I will be impertinent if you will be idle. Be assured that I always think your correspondence great honour & great pleasure. I beg of your Lordship to say every thing that is respectfull, that is affectionate, that is gratefull, to Mrs. Drummond for me. I cannot tell you how much I regret, that I do not live where I could often enjoy her society. She has made a deep impression on my heart, & the sentiments of regard & love I have for her will never wear out. I talk of her to Miss Gregory continually. I do not wonder that my nephew should be a little in awe in your Lordships company, nor indeed am I sorry for it, for I do not think with Lord Chesterfield, that timidity & modesty are unbecoming a young Man. I assure you my nephew has an amiable disposition & I think good natural parts. He will make no bad figure if he cultivates them, but as that is a point entirely dependant on himself, I can only hope he will do so, it must be as he pleases. I shall send to London for ye 5th edition of ye elements of Criticism⁽²⁾ directly, being placed there, I consider as

(1) This letter shows Mrs. Montagu as a deliberate champion of the Christian religion.

(2) See The Elements of Criticism 5th Edition, ll, 449³ where Kaines quoted a slightly altered version of part of Mrs. Montagu's letter of 4th November, 1766.

having acquired a high place in the Temple of Fame, & the most honourable title in that August & immortal fabrick will be that of Lord Kaimes's Friend. My amiable Miss Gregory desires her respects to your Lordship & Mrs. Drummond, Mr. Montagu who is much charmd with your great work begs his compts.

I am my Lord with the highest respect, admiration, & invariable affection

Your Lordships

Most Obliged & most devoted

Friend & Hble Servant

Eliz: Montagu

My Lord

Sandleford May ye 7th
1776

It is long since I have indulged myself in the honour & pleasure of an epistolary correspondence with your Lordship; but in thought I have maintained such an uninterrupted intercourse with you, that in reassuming my pen & ink I seem only to be giving a visible & palpable expression & utterance to what used to flow imperceptibly towards you. It seems to me therefore almost impertinent & improper to call this a recommencement of our correspondence, which on my part, never ceased. I believe the last letter I wrote to your Lordship was just before I set out from London with an intention to spend the Winter at Nice but a fever which seized me in my way to Dover put it out of my power to pursue my scheme. A slow fever is a great damper of the enterprizing spirit necessary for long journeys. I have had my health better since that illness than for some years, so that I do not think it necessary to transfer myself to a warmer climate, & therefore have dropt all intentions of passing a whole winter abroad. I intend to go to Paris in June, (1) & to amuse myself in that Town & its environs for about three or four months, & then to return to old England & old friends. If I live till next Summer, I flatter myself I may narrate my travels to you on the Banks of the Tyne, if I can allure your Lordship & Mrs. Drummond to visit me there, & you have long flattered with the hopes of such a visit. I have told you what I have been doing, & intend to do, will not your Lordship communicate to me what you have done & are doing? My most elaborate performances & most important operations are but the beings of a day, your Lordships Sketches will endure for ages. I hope for the sake of the World you will not become indolent & repose under your laurels. I shall recommend myself to some of the first litterati at Paris by carrying your Works with me. Your last work (2) will be perfectly relish'd by them, for their best philosophers are much employ'd on speculations of the same kind, tho they are not endued with so happy talents for these nice disquisitions. I am glad to find Philosophy no longer confined to the study of Metaphysicks, but landed on the Terra Firma of human things. Your Countryman Dr. Smith has just publish'd a Work which will do him great honour. (3)

(1) Mrs. Montagu left for Paris on the 21st of June and arrived back in England on 15th October. Perhaps the most notable occasion on a very interesting tour was her visit to the French Academy where she had the pleasure of hearing Dr. D'Alembert attack Voltaire.

(2) Sketches of the History of Man (1774)

(3) The Wealth of Nations was published 9th March, 1776.

If he can subdue the monopolizing spirit which narrows all the paths of commercial intercourse he will do notable service to Mankind. I think he has taken the only means to introduce another Golden Age, the felicity of the first arose from self-interest, avarice, envy etc. not having yet taken place, if he can extirpate them the second golden age will be more splendid, & as happy as the first. I believe it is much more difficult to teach Wisdom to the Cunning than the ignorant, so that I have not so good an opinion of his scholars as of his Lessons, but if a golden age is to be established it must be on his principles, & I really believe that the selfishness which directs the Councils & Senates of all Nations obstruct the universal prosperity, & in the end hurt those they were intended to advantage.

My eldest Nephew retains a gratefull sense of yours & Mrs. Drummonds goodness to him. He is now at Cambridge. I beg my best respects to Mrs. Drummond & I should think myself happy in any opportunity of enjoying her society. in the meantime I recollect with great pleasures the days I pass'd at Blair Drummond.

Miss Gregory desires her most respectfull comp^{ts} to your Lordship & Mrs. Drummond. I have been this fortnight at my House in Berkshire enjoying the gentle pleasures of this gentle Season but I must soon return to London to prepare for my expedition to Paris. If there is any thing in either of those Citties in which I can be useful to you or Mrs. Drummond I hope you will oblige me with your commands.

I am my Lord

Your Lordships

Most Obedient & most faithfull

Hble Serv^t

Eliz Montagu

Note. This letter bears the customary black mourning seal. Mr. Montagu died in May, 1775.

T

My Lord

Denton Aug ye 8th 1778

All old sayings are true, for nothing but truth is of long duration; but of true sayings the truest is, that the quarel of Lovers is the renewing of Love, A letter I received this instant from Miss Gregory telling me that your Lordships heart is returnd to its allegiance to me, & will renew its vows at Denton on saturday sennight, gives me such pleasing palpitations of the heart as I have not felt since I was eighteen; nay not then, for they were mere transient flutterings, these are constant & regular beatings, but however do not take them all to your own share, for I protest the hopes of seeing Mrs. Drummond, whom I honour, love, & respect, as much as it is possible without comitting the sin of Idolatry has a great part in my joy & exultation. I must not indulge myself in expressing my joy & gratitude for your kind intentions, & I shall most earnestly pray that nothing may prevent my having the honour and happiness of seeing yr Lordship & Mrs. Drummond as you have entitled me to hope. Least I should be too late for the Edinbro' Post, who like a true Mercury has wings at his feet, I must only desire my most affectionate & grateful respects may be presented to Mrs. Drummond, with much assurance of my desire of the honour of seeing her at Denton, as the imperfect medium of words can express, I know they can not declare the regard & affection with which I am hers, & your Lordships

Most Obliged

& Faithfull friend

& Hble Servt

E Montagu

Note The visit was duly made. The next letter acknowledges it.

My Lord

Denton
Aug ye 30 1778

I flatter myself that your Lordship has believed, nay hoped, that I have been sick, or was dead, for you must otherwise have determined me to be ungrateful, a circumstance worse & more dreddful than either of the others. You will be perfectly glad to hear therefore that the most mild of these incidents has been the cause of my not expressing my thanks for your Lordships & Mrs. Drummond most kind, most welcome, most delightful visit at Denton. The day after you left me I intended writing to you, The remembrance of the pleasure I had enjoy'd in your conversation would have been too strong & vivid for the imperfection of words to have done justice to, had it not been softend & melted down by a melancholly reflection, that you were every moment going farther from me, & that every roll of your Coach wheels was carrying you to a greater distance. I took up my pen to write to you, but a troublesome impertinent toothach, which was aggravated by stooping my head to write, obliged me to lay it down again, this malady plagued me for a few days, & I was then seized with a violent fit of bilious cholick in the night, & forced to send for one of the Sons of Asculapius. As the said Asculapius had had a very numerous progeny, his healing faculties have been divided amongst them into very small & slender portions, that I was very glad Dame Nature deliverd me into the hands of an excellent Nurse calld sleep, by two hours of her constant attendance on my pillow I was in a manner cured before ye Doctor arrived, However I was left so languid, that I thought myself unable to write till yesterday, & then forsooth; the post did not go to Edinbro.' In Yorkshire when any person is sick & weak we say they are silly! & without being a materialist one may confess, that the mind is obliged to bend under the infirmities of the body, however mine was not so silly as not to follow you to Blair Drummond, to admire there the Majestick beauties of the prospects at a distance, & the softness & elegance of the objects immediately around which your Lordship has embellish'd,

E quel, che 'l bello, e 'l caro accresce a l'opre
L'arte, che tutto fa, nulla si scopre.(1)

The recollection of those things I had seen at Blair Drummond

(1) Tasso, Jerusalemme Liberata, Canto XVI, Stanza IX.
Art which adds beauty and richness to the work, doing everything [to perfect Nature] does not obtrude itself.
Mrs. Montagu quoted the famous opening lines of Ariosto's Orlando Furioso in letter A:

Le Donne, i Cavalier, l'arme, gli amori,
Le cortesie, l'audaci imprese.

(i.e. Ladies, Knights, arms, loves, courtesy, bold undertakings - the stock themes of the romantic epic)

was delightfull, but the remembrance of the conversations I had enjoy'd there was much more so, & inspired an enthusiasm which easily deluded me into a pleasing reverie that I was sitting on my favourite seat betwixt your Lordship & Mrs. Drummond, & tho in Person, as puny Invalid in Northumberland, by the magick power of the imagination, I have partaken of the exercise of your journey & have arrived with you in Scotland. I return your Lordship many thanks for ye description of ye Cart with which my Steward is so delighted he will immediately get such made for our use.

Miss Gregory desires her best respects. If I could recollect the time when she was not perfectly good I might draw some vanity from her being so now, but I believe she was born faultless.

With perfect Esteem I am my Lord

Yr Lordships

Most Obliged & Hble etc.

E. Montagu

My Lord

A great cold in my eyes has prevented my making an immediate acknowledgment for the kind & welcome favour of your Lordships letter. The prohibition of my Doctors to employ myself at all in writing, was one of the most disagreeable circumstances that attended my illness last winter. These medical Sages assure me, that the writing posture is of all things the most likely to bring on the cruel spasms in my stomach. While they only enjoyn'd abstinence from the delicacies of the table I submitted without regret. Every article of the bill of fare of la gourmandise I can easily forego, but to forbid one the mental repast, the litterary feast of friendly correspondence is cruel indeed! The confidence I have in the Bath waters gives me courage to disobey their rigorous instructions, & I will indulge myself in writing your Lordship a long letter.

You tell me, that in low spirits, bad weather, & dull society you are apt to think I do not love, esteem, & respect you as I used to do, such mistaken opinions your Lordship may indulge with impunity, but if in the same circumstances I did not do the reverse of all this, the consequences might be fatal to me. In bad weather, low spirits, & disagreeable society I support myself by a confidence in your affection & esteem. In physical, moral, or civil distresses; in all vexatious incidents in social intercourse, or in litterary disappointments, I fly to Lord Kaimes for refuge. Your talents assist me when I am to drudge through the laboured page of some Author who wants spirit & energy in his manner, originality in his matter. If I meet with a dull companion with whom one can neither be merry nor wise, I console myself with a hope of again conversing with Lord Kaimes, or have recourse to my memory, where are treasured up the hours I passed in his conversation, when witt, or wisdom, mark'd the moments.

I am very glad to hear that your Lordship is again dedicating your pen to the publick service, and most particularly that you begin your instructions with that Season on which the whole harvest of life of life depends. We, who are Farmers, know the ground must be tilled, & cleansed, & good seed carefully sown, if we mean to reap a rich crop, & I am proud to find I have always follow'd your plans in regard to religion with the infants that have been under my care. Whenever they have admired the sun's refulgent beams, the lovely orb of the moon, or any of the striking beauties of the creation, I have endeavoured to raise their thoughts to the great Creator, & to set before them his Majesty without the terrors that might drive them from the contemplation, In their seasons of recreation, & innocent delights I have represented him as the indulgent Parent

from whose bounty they enjoy'd such blessings, & who, by his omnipresence & omnipotence, could at all times bestow all good, & guard from pain & evil. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, but the love of God is the Parent of devotion. When as Men they go forth into the World, & temptations throng around them, they ought then to consider God in the awful character of a Legislator, carefully to obey his Laws, & dread the displeasure that must be the consequence of disobedience to those rules, on which the general welfare of mankind depends no less in fact (tho' not so apparently) than on the regular course of the tydes, or succession of the Seasons: and this will no way impair the early principle of the love of God, for the more benevolent the Lawgiver, the more strictly will he require an observance of those Laws which tend to the general good, & perhaps this^{is} what the Apostle means when he says, there is mercy with him that he may be feared. I have no doubt but the Queen will with great pleasure patronize a work which is favorable to the great object of her Maternal care. Her Majesty is not only an example to all Queens, but a pattern to all Mothers. Her disposition is such as will incline her to receive your work as you could wish, but it ought to be introduced by the Bishop of Litchfield, with whom I have not the honour & happiness to be at all connected, & indeed if I were so, I should still recommend that it might be mention'd to him by his & your common friend, Lord Mansfield. Your work would lose of its dignity by passing through my hands, I know not anything however excellent that would not receive more by passing through the medium of Lord Mansfield. Your Lordship is most singularly fortunate in the Persons whom you have to deal with in this affair. A Queen, whose conduct has a grace & beauty on every occasion that can be derived from nothing but a habit of devotion. The Bishop of Litchfield's writings show him to be, not only a Person of great learning, & extensive knowledge, but of the politest & most elegant taste, & his character in the World is just what one would suppose must result from the happy combination of talents & virtues. Of Lord Mansfield I need not say anything to your Lordship who know him so well.

I suppose your Lordship is by this time settled at Edinburgh for the Winter.

I hope in about 3 weeks to carry from hence such a stock of health as will be equal to the Winters wear. When you publish your infant Education I shall endeavour to enter the second childhood as far as docility to my teacher & reverence to his Doctrines can bring me to that state. Whenever your Lordship has an hour of leisure you cannot bestow it on any one who will be more happy in ye favour, or more grateful for it than I shall be, who am with the most sincere & affectionate esteem

My dear Lord

Your most obliged
& Faithfull Hble Servant
Eliz Montagu

Note. This letter was almost certainly written at Bath in October 1780. The reasons for this dating are that Mrs. Montagu was at Bath in that month of that year (the letter was clearly written from Bath); that she expressly states that she is disobeying an order of her physicians given in the winter of the previous year, and that in the letter of December, 1781 she tells us it was almost two years since the medical prohibition was given. There is also a reference to Lord Kaimes's forthcoming educational work, Loose Hints Upon Education, published 1781, but Kaimes was thinking on his book for several years before it was published and so that reference does not necessarily point to the year 1780.

X

My dear Lord

Portman Square Dec ye 30th

I am afraid your Lordship has condemned and pass'd sentence on me as guilty of ingratitude for favours, & insensibility on the most tender & important subjects. It is now almost two years since on account of grievous & violent spasms in my stomach, the medical faculty enjoyn'd me never to write but on the most urgent business, as the posture a short sighted Person is obliged to, on such occasion, is very pernicious in complaints like mine. My situation in the world obliges me to be continually writing to Stewards & agents, & added to my other cares, I had assumed those which attend building a large House. I perceived plainly the necessity of denying myself the delicate pleasures of a correspondence with the ingenious & the amiable, with those whom I admired & loved, and to employ my pen as a mere drudge of necessity, & the implement of care, & vulgar business. I have of late I thank God quite recoverd my health, & tho the fear of a return of the spasms may make me observe temperance in writing I am determined not to suffer the rigorous abstinence before enjoynd to subsist in its full force & I can never more rejoyce in its mitigation than when I can avail myself of it by continuing our wonted correspondence. (1)

I longed to write my acknowledgments for your excellent work which I received from your Lordship on its first publication. I cannot express the pleasure it gave me to see one of the Sovereigns of Parnassus the favorite of Apollo & the Muses drop all subjects in which he could display his superior witt taste & learning to assume that in which he could be most useful to his fellow creatures & to do service to those who could at best lisp their thanks, and that such a work should be the most acceptable to the queen of great Brittain made my joy compleat, When the Wisest, & the greatest, interest themselves for the best things, it does honour to the age, brings felicity to the Country. May your doctrine & her Majesty's example lead the rising generation into the path of peace & the ways of true pleasantness! from whence in search of peace & pleasure their Parents have absurdly deviated. A religious education is the best thing a Parent can bestow on his Child. The estates & titles which avarice or ambition aspire to transmit, are precarious, & transient advantages: A thousand things may impair the first, national calamities may annihilate the latter, but whatever unites us with the eternal & unchangeable Being, & binds us in strict obedience to his commandments & Laws must be of everlasting benefit, for tho the World should pass away one tittle of his word shall not pass away. Reward & punishment will ever await on his promise or prohibition.

(1) Loose Hints upon Education, chiefly concerning Culture of the Heart, (1781).

The decline of the year not having brought back my spasms, I intended to indulge myself in the pleasure of writing your Lordship a long letter, but I have lived in such continual bustle on account of removing from my House in Hillstreet to one I built for myself in Portman Square, it has been impossible for me to write to my Friends. The mornings spent in directions to Joiners, Carpenters, Smiths Upholsterers, etc, etc. leave me quite weary & exhausted. I came to London ye 23^d of October, & ever since that day have dedicated my attention to putting my new House into a comfortable state. Magnificence without convenience, like civility unaccompanied by good will, & good nature, rather disgusts & provokes^{than} delights & satisfies. All the celebrated artists in England of the present times have done something towards embellishing my House, but its best grace is simplicity. My rooms are large & lofty, & the apartment I inhabit is admirably well disposed. The sound of workmens hammers is the only thing that I find displeasing in my Habitation & I flatter myself that less than a fortnight will get me clear of them. I wish your Lordship & Mrs. Drummond would make a visit to our Metropolis, how delighted should I be to see such valuable Friends, & elegant Connoisseurs in a House I think they would find agreeable, whether they attended to its accomodations or ornaments! The fine weather we enjoy'd last Summer must have heightend your pleasure in Blair Drummond & given perfect beauty to its character of sublime. My imagination often transports me to its lovely & Majestick scenes but alas! I have not talents nor powers to represent the conversations & various delights I enjoy'd there. I beg that your Lordship will do me the favour to present my most affectionate respects to Mrs. Drummond. My best wishes at all times & seasons attend you both it is at this season one is particularly allow'd to express them, & I assure you no one can more zealously wish you every felicity this World can afford, & may you still persevere in giving part of your time to the instruction & benefit of mankind. I am glad I can tell you that some of our great Ladies suckle their Children, & I hope what you have written on ye subject will make this duly more universally practised.⁽¹⁾ Miss Gregory hopes your Lordship & Mrs. Drummond will accept her best respects. With the most affectionate I am

my Dear Lord yr most Obliged
& faithfull Humble Serv^t
Eliz Montagu

(1) One is reminded of Rousseau's pre-occupation with the matter.

Note. There is no doubt about the dating of this letter. Mrs. Montagu moved from Hill Street to Portman Square in December 1781.

Omission in Letter Y (12th November, 1782)

"I think the calm autumn of life, as well as of the year, has many advantages; both have a peculiar serenity, a gentle tranquillity, are less busy & agitated, because ye hopes of the spring, & the energies of the Summer are over, but if these tranquil seasons were enliven'd by the singing of the birds, & ye gay flutter of ye butterfly, they wd be still more delightfull Mrs. Hume will be the Philomel of your Autumn, & her little family will represent the pretty butterflies of midsummer. Much will Blair Drummond be embellish'd & endeared by these additions."

Tytler omits Mrs. Montagu's pleasant imaginings. He finishes the sentence prosaically: "because the hopes of the spring, and the vivid delights of the summer, are over: but these tranquil seasons have their appropriate enjoyments: and a well-regulated mind has everything beautiful that is in the order of nature."

FACSIMILE OF A PAGE OF A LETTER OF MAY 7th, 1776.

Lordship communicate to me what you
have done & are doing. My most elaborate
performances & most important operations
are but the beings of a day, your Lordships
Sketches will endure for ages. I hope for
the sake of the World you will not become
indolent & repose under your laurels. I shall
recommend myself to some of the first
litterati at Paris by carrying your Works
with me. your last work will be perfectly
relish'd by them, for their best philosophers
are much employ'd on speculations of the
same kind, tho they are not endow'd with
so happy talents for these nice disquisitions.
I am glad to find Philosophy no longer confined
to the study of metaphysics, but landed on the
terra firma of human things. Your Country-
man Dr Smith has just publish'd a work
which will do him great honour. If he can
subdue the monopolizing spirit which narrows
all the paths of commercial intercourse he
will do notable service to mankind. I think

Facsimile of a page of a letter of 7th May, 1776, in
which Mrs. Montagu tells Lord Kaimes she will
recommend herself to some of the litterati at Paris
by carrying his Works with her, and in which she
refers to Adam Smith's newly published Wealth of
Nations.

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 - II. The Bluestockings - General.
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